TheVillage

www.villageonline.co.uk

Issue #254 May 2025

NEWS & FEATURES from Alvechurch, Barnt Green, Blackwell, Burcot Beoley, Cofton Hackett, Finstall, Hopwood, Bordesley, Rowney Green, Lickey, Lickey End, Marlbrook, The Oakalls & everywhere in between!

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TheVillage Issue 254 May 2025

inside

Bringing you village life for more than 25 years

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Front cover: Dappled light, taken by Michael Corfield, of Rowney Green.

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IN THE HOT HOUSE!

GREEN BELT BUILDING PLANS SET TO CREATE SUMMER OF DISCONTENT

THE VILLAGE AREA is heading for a summer of heated debate over where as many as 9,000 extra new homes are to be built over the next 15 years.

Decisions that have been delayed for years by changes in guidelines and targets from central Government are finally about to be made.

Strategic planning officers and district councillors have been at loggerheads behind closed doors for many months as they try to agree on the sites they will put before the public for consultation.

As ever, the fear among villagers is that by the time they are consulted this summer, the sites will have already been chosen and it is a "done deal".

Already potential sites are bubbling into the public domain with one, said to be for around 6,000 homes, attracting much attention.

The Bromsgrove MP, Bradley Thomas, has entered the fray over this 404 acre stretch of Green Belt buffering our villages from Birmingham overspill.

The so-called "Groveley Garden Village" would stretch across the fields above Upper Bittell reservoir all the way to the edge of the metropolis, and from Cofton Hackett on one side, to Hopwood on the other.

Mr Thomas said: "This development could be huge. It is an area approximately double the size of of Alvechurch. The proposed development would sit south of Longbridge and within the parishes of Alvechurch, Barnt Green and Cofton Hackett."

HOMES WITH A VIEW: Looking south over the fields above Upper Bittell, the Green Belt site of the mooted 'Groveley Garden Village'.

On its own, this site could accommodate two thirds of the extra new homes the Government wants built within Bromsgrove district by 2041.

Campaigners are already objecting, urging planners to only offer previously used "brown" land first rather than the green fields developers can most easily build on and profit from.

A quick look at the map of the many other village area sites put forward by would-be developers to Bromsgrove District Council (see https://www.bromsgrove.gov.uk/media/om5omhtv/parish-maps.pdf) shows the task faced by planners and district councillors in trying to find the right balance of providing much-needed new homes, while protecting village settings.

But the "Groveley Village" option of devastating the Green Belt on the Birmingham border with a development heading in size towards the much-derided "Barntchurch" "garden town" idea, first raised seven years ago, would surely raise the public temperature to levels too high for our strategic planners to bear.

Light to shine over dark forces

THE BEACON made by members of a village Men in Sheds group for the D-Day commemoration last year will be lit again this month for the 80th anniversary of Victory in Europe Day.

May 8 marks the day when the allied forces accepted Germany's unconditional surrender of its armed forces, ending the Second World War in Europe. The beacon (left) will be lit at Alvechurch Cricket Club at 9.30pm during a celebration of that momentous day in 1945.

The Alvechurch event begins at 6pm, with the bells of St Laurence planned to be rung at 6.30pm. Bagpipes will be played at 9.15pm before the beacon is lit and a tribute read.

As this is more of a celebration, organisers are encouraging people to bring picnics. The bar will open and there will be a barbecue.

The High Sheriff visits

ALVECHURCH Community Larder was delighted to receive the High Sheriff of Worcestershire, Charles Moyle JP, and Chair of Bromsgrove District Council, Councillor Sam Ammar (both pictured, right), who visited them this spring.

The High Sheriff issued the larder with a citation, which is an award recognising the outstanding contributions to a community, after the Larder was nominated by District Councillor Rachael Bailes.

Outstanding contribution: Larder volunteers were recognised for their work in the community.

The citation recognised all of the volunteers who enable the larder to support the wellbeing of the parish, and to help reduce food waste.

The larder is also in the process of seeking charity status, which will further help them them to improve their services to the community.

You can find the Larder at Alvechurch Baptist Hall Thursdays 8-9pm and Fridays 9am-12.30pm.

Visit the website: www. alvechurchcommunitylarder.co.uk

Fringe festival fun for all at Blackwell

BLACKWELL'S first-ever multi-arts festival takes place from 9–11 May with the promise of 20 free performances in a range of arts, culture and activities for all the family.

***Blackwell Fringe* will showcase some of the best of local talent with performances and exhibitions including song and dance, live bands, music, comedy and art. More than 100 performers will be taking part, from former first school pupils busking in the street to seasoned professionals and a chorus of choirs to a popular Abba tribute singer. There will be crafts, games, stories for the young ones, and comedy night humour that may be strictly for adults!**

Details are available on facebook.com/blackwellfestival and at www.blackwellfestival.org.

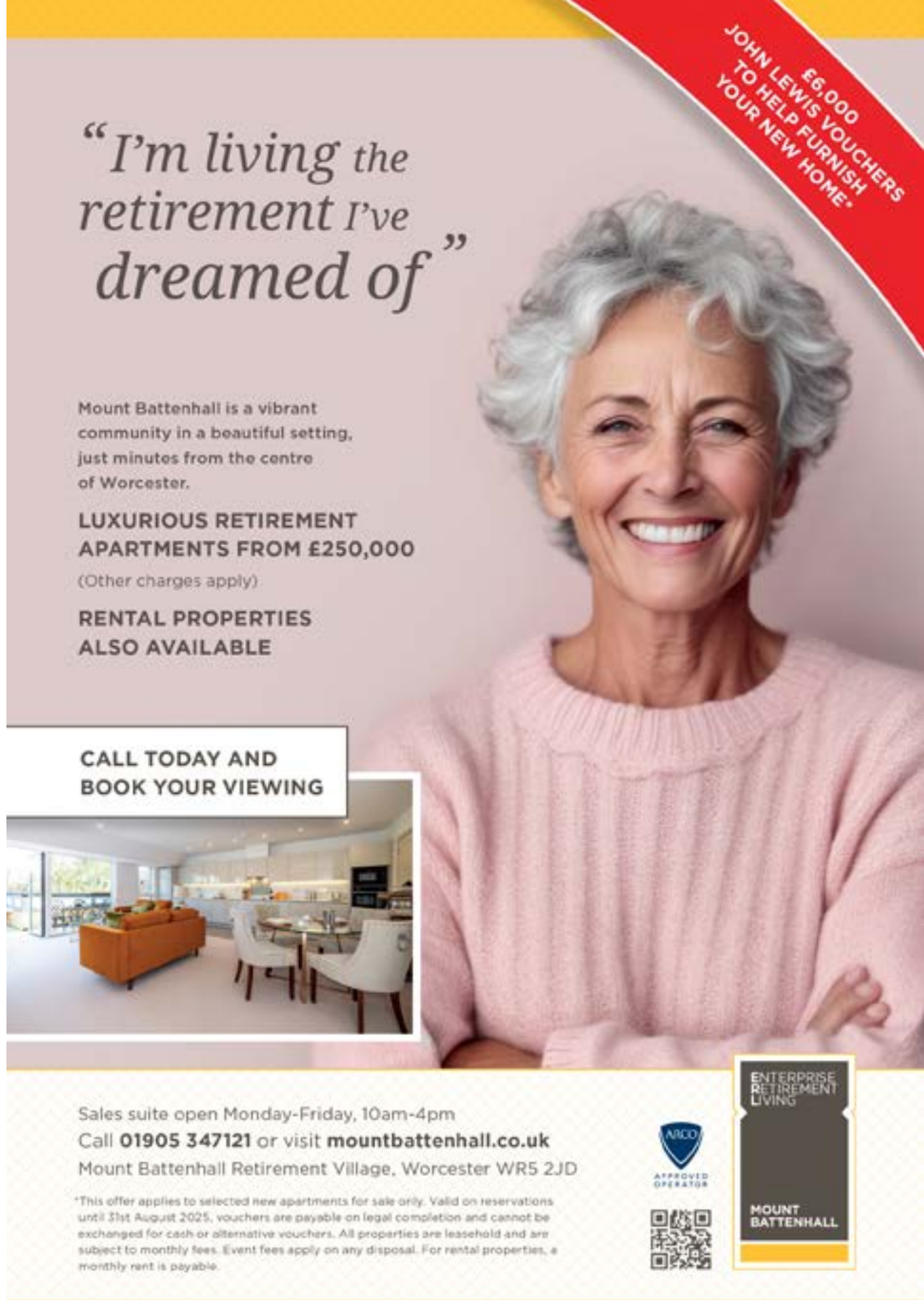
A pint in honour of Fin Church

THE Wings of Hope Ball, organised by the family and friends of Alvechurch school boy Fin Church who died from a brain tumour ten years ago, will be held in May.

To raise money for Brain Tumour Research and Birmingham Children's Hospital, an online auction will be running from 1– 31 May. The auction has a varied mix of fantastic prizes to suit all interests and budgets, including a week in a cottage in St Ives, football memorabilia and bottles of champagne. The raffle can be found at: **airauctioneer.com/wings-of-hope-ball-2025**.

Villagers are also invited to "buy Fin a drink" as the ball falls close to what woud have been Fin's 21st birthday. This can be done by clicking on the donation links, on the justtgiving page (accessed via the QR code) and choose whether you would like to donate to Brain Tumour Research or Birmingham Children's Hospital, both of which were personal chosen charities by Fin, who raised much money for them himself.

A spokesperson for the ball said: "Fin was so proud of what he and his family and friends had raised, to do this would be a lovely way to mark his special heavenly birthday."



EASTER EXCITEMENT

BLACKWELL First School hosted an Easter-themed family fun day on their playing fields in the run-up to Easter. Families were able to enjoy Easter-themed crafts, face-painting, hot dogs and a cake stall.

Young villagers were tasked with collecting a series of letters from cardboard eggs hidden around the field and woods, allowing them to win prizes.

One of the organisers, Manjit Ghag, said that she and the other parent organisers were over moon about the generosity of those attending towards the schools needs: "We have done the maths and we raised £838 on our Easter Egg Hunt. This is amazing!"

Lickey Hills Primary School also hosted a fun afternoon of Easter activities for Reception pupils, whose parents were also invited to join them at the school for crafts, educational Easter activities, and an opportunity for parents and grandparents to enjoy a fun-filled afternoon at school with their children.

A lovely afternoon was had by children, and parents who remarked on how nice it was to see their children in the school setting.

Easter Crafts: Pupils at Lickey Hills Primary had a great afternoon.

Image/Keith Woolford

Image/Keith Woolford

Above: Blackwell egg-hunt fun. Right: Parents joined pupils in Lickey.

AVONCROFT
ARTS SOCIETY

Avoncroft Arts Society are running a series of exciting and creative workshops throughout 2025 (right), which are available to book. The workshops cover a range of art styles and mediums, from traditional watercolours to festive wreath making.

For more information, contact:
events@avoncroftarts.org.uk
01527 833829

Avoncroft Arts Society
Redditch Road, Stoke Heath
Bromsgrove, B60 4JR

31/05/2025	10am - 3pm	Pointillism in Acrylics, led by Adrian Clamp	£35
14/06/2025	10am - 1pm	Journals, led by Jenni Schuett	£20
05/07/2025	10am - 3pm	Fauvism in Acrylics, led by Richard Crabtree	£35
12/07/2025	10am - 3pm	Calligraphy, led by Annemarie Hulley	£35
13/09/2025	10am - 3pm	Beginners Pastels, led by Annemarie Hulley	£35
20/09/2025	10am - 3pm	Beginners Acrylics, led by Adrian Clamp	£35
27/09/2025	10am - 3pm	Beginners Watercolours, led by Richard Crabtree	£35
11/10/2025	10am -1pm	Felting for Beginners, led by Lynda Sharp	£50
25/10/2025	10am - 3pm	Painting with Oils, led by Adrian Clamp	£35
08/11/2025	10am - 3pm	Watercolour and Ink, led by Brendan McMahon	£35
22/11/2025	10am - 12.30pm	Glass Christmas Decorations, led by Marc Weston	£39
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Our girls-only education model encourages girls to take up and excel in STEM subjects with a high percentage going on to study them at A Level and beyond. Girls at RGS Dodderhill are more likely to participate in sports and stay active, supported by excellent on-site facilities, including extensive sports fields, netball and tennis courts and brand-new cricket facilities, all set within our picturesque seven-acre site.

Exceptional co-curricular opportunities for all ages at RGS Dodderhill range from horse riding and watersports to coding, dance, and art, ensuring there is something to spark every child's interest and passion.

Our reputation for exceptional pastoral care ensures every child feels supported, happy and ready to achieve their best. Wrap-around care, extending from early morning to evening, further supports families with busy schedules.

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A SPRING DAY ON THE WATERS

BARNT Green Waters has launched a new website: www.barntgreenwaters.co.uk which provides a comprehensive overview of the Bittell Reservoirs Estate. However, it is far better to appreciate its beauty and the facilities by visiting us at our forthcoming Open Day.

Following on from last year's successful event, Barnt Green Waters – incorporating the thriving Fishing and Sailing Clubs, their associated sporting groups and the Friends of Bittell – will be hosting this year's Open Day on Saturday 17th May with the opportunity to experience sailing, subject to weather conditions, discuss fishing opportunities and also tour the Estate (on foot), all of which is within a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

Barnt Green Waters is a private limited Company, limited by guarantee, whose sole function is to manage and maintain the Bittell Reservoirs Estate. It was formed in 1920 following the purchase of sections of land and the two small Arrow Pools from the Earl of Plymouth for a sum of £5,000 and was given the "Sporting Rights" in perpetuity.

Most of the Estate however, which covers 170 acres, is owned by the Canal and River Trust who lease it to the Company. The bulk of the area is occupied by three reservoirs, Upper Bittell, Lower Bittell and Mill Shrub, which feed both the Worcester to Birmingham canal and the River Arrow. The Estate includes a diversity of habitats, which is the reason it is designated as a SSSI.

The Company, together with the two clubs, funded the building of a clubhouse (The Boathouse Venue) which overlooks Upper Bittell and houses a large meeting room, changing facilities, a kitchen and bar.

The Sailing Club (est. 1918) is one of the premier sailing clubs in the West Midlands and membership is open to all categories. We are also an RYA Teaching Establishment, providing Junior Training courses from the age of seven, together with adult courses. We feel sure that whether you are an experienced sailor, or a newcomer to the sport, you will gain a great deal should you decide to join us.

Much of our activity is centred on racing but we also encourage informal sailing outside the racing programme.

The Sailing Club also incorporates a Windsurfing section, an expanding Stand Up Paddleboarding group and a small team of canoeists and kayakers.

To maintain our status as a recognised RYA Training Centre, the facilities and training are regularly reviewed and inspected by the RYA. We are committed to running race training courses, and to increasing the numbers of instructors and Club racing coaches.

The Fishing Club was established in 1888 and provides a wide range of fishing opportunities in an attractive and peaceful environment covering five stretches of water. Three of these, Lower Bittell, Mill Shrub and Upper Arrow are reserved for fly fishing and are stocked with trout. All three provide bank fishing and there are also boats on the two larger trout pools.

The largest reservoir on the estate (Upper Bittell, 80 acres) is a coarse fishery with a large head of bream, roach and perch and provides excellent pike fishing in the autumn and winter months. The final pool, Lower Arrow, contains tench and carp, as well as bream, roach and perch.

Full members of the Fishing Club can fish in all five pools, while a separate annual membership is available for those who only wish to coarse fish. There are no day tickets available to the public but members may invite guests to fish on payment of a small fee.

In addition to the two clubs, the Birmingham Running, Athletics & Triathlon Club (BRAT Club) organises open water swimming at Upper Bittell for their members from May to September, to help them train for competitive swimming events.

Anyone interested in natural history and the countryside can join our **Friends of Bittell Nature Group** which provides access to the Estate. The reservoirs are home to a range of wading birds and is a stopping off point for many species of migrating bird, and this section includes the well-established Birdwatchers.

The Boathouse Venue, with its stunning panoramic views across the tranquil 80 acres of Upper Bittell reservoir, offers a unique and secluded venue for companies and voluntary organisations to hire during the week for training sessions, meetings and seminars, or as a regular meeting point for a club or society.

At the weekend, it becomes an ideal location for wedding receptions, special anniversary or birthday lunches, evening events, or just family get-togethers.

There is the option of erecting a marquee on the car park or, a covered extension on the side of the building, to provide a reception area, or simply placing one or more gazebos on the grass area to provide shade in the summer months.

To enquire about these facilities, please contact us at; boathouse@barntgreenwaters.co.uk.

We would be pleased to welcome you to Upper Bittell on Saturday 17th May, between 10.30am and 3:00pm, to view the various sporting sections and activities, obtain information from the relevant contacts, which hopefully may lead you to join us and take part in one or more of the above membership activities.

COME AND MEET US

We would be pleased to welcome you to Upper Bittell on Saturday the 17th May, between 10:30am and 3pm, to meet up with the various sporting sections and activities, obtain the information you need first hand and the relevant direct points of contact to hopefully join us and take part in one or more of the membership activities.

Barnt Green Waters Ltd, Upper Bittell Reservoir
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LOVING THE LICKEY HILLS

IN LICKEY and throughout the Lickey Hills Country Park, plenty has been going on to rejuvenate the area, *reports Keith Woolford*.

The Habitat Heroes (pictured above, right), who are now the only group officially able to complete volunteer work in the Lickey Hills Country Park, have recently been seen clearing fallen trees and repairing a WWI building at the Visitor Centre on Warren Lane.

Two active members of The Lickey Community Group have been recognised by the War Graves Commission for their work in the Lickey cemetery. There are two graves from WWI and five from the Second World War.

With guidelines from the authority, Lickey residents Roy and Sue Hughes have regularly kept the seven headstones clean and clear of weeds for more than two years. Recent work has included laying fresh turf and planting grass seeds immediately in front of three headstones, which will helpwill stop dirt being splashed onto the surface during heavy rain.

The Bilberry Hill Centre on Rose Hill, in Lickey, has also received some much needed TLC. Now more of an eyesore than a landmark, councillors and members of The Lickey Community Group painted-out vandals graffiti at the centre (pictured top).

With brushes in hand, local Councillors Adrian Kriss and Anita Dale were joined by Birmingham Councillors Adrian Delaney and Simon Morrall who worked alongside Roy and Sue Hughes.

The future of this iconic building, first used at the turn of the last century, and another Cadbury donation, is in real doubt as there are no plans going forward.

What's on this spring

Explore the highlights of Cofton Park Manor this May and June; with events and breaks at the luxury care home in the heart of Cofton Hackett.

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COMING UP THIS MAY: HEART OF THE COMMUNITY DAY

Monday 19 May, 12 – 3pm | Catshill Village Hall, Bromsgrove

This May, we're reaching out to the local older community with a heartfelt invitation to our Heart of the Community Day. This joyful afternoon features live entertainment from the fabulous Debbie Miles (12 - 1pm), followed by a delicious buffet provided by our talented chefs (1 - 2pm). Every guest will also be entered into a free prize draw! Held in partnership with Catshill Village Hall, we can't wait to welcome you!

JUNE: COMMEMORATING D-DAY

Friday 6 June, 2:30 - 3:30pm | At Cofton Park Manor

Join us as we mark the 81st anniversary of the D-Day landings with a moving tribute, featuring vintage vocals from The Bluebird Belles. It's set to be a beautiful afternoon of music and remembrance.

To RSVP for either event, pop in or give us a call on 0121 387 2722.

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Cofton Park Manor | 466 Lickey Road | Cofton Hackett | B45 8UU

Village Views

WHY HOG MIDDLE LANE?

Dear Editor – Is driving in the middle lane of motorways now a "thing", as young people say?

Having recently driven up and down a few motorways, I can't believe how many times I have come up behind someone hogging the middle lane and driving at below the speed limit.

Don't they realise it is dangerous, causing other motorists to travel across three lanes and back just to overtake them?

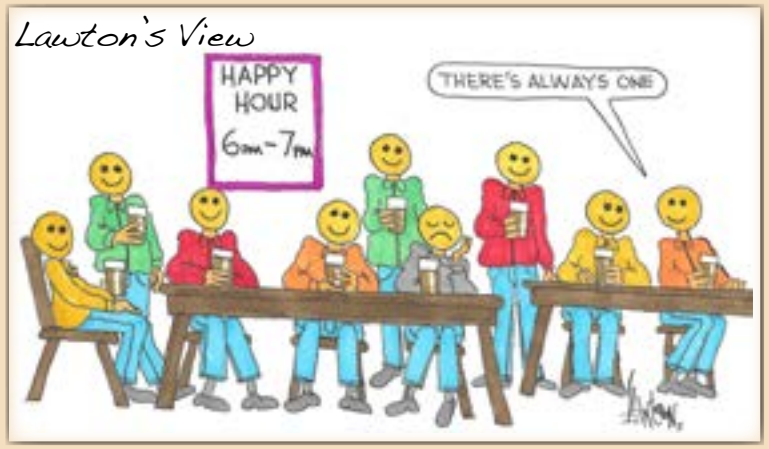
It has also been an offence for more than ten years now, with a fixed penalty of £100 and three penalty points for those the police choose to take action against.

Weirdly, it seems to be mainly 20- or 30-somethings driving, people who you'd think would have passed their driving tests in the past 10 years and so should have learned the laws.

Or don't driving instructors teach this because learners are only let loose on motorways once they've passed their test?

I see police did actually fine a motorist for "overtaking fresh air" on the M6 last month – yet there have been fewer than 150 fines dished out in a decade. Perhaps a few more well-publicised fines will get the message across?

Frustrated, Blackwell



The space issue

Dear Editor – While I know that parking is an issue throughout Alvechurch at the moment, and the Tanyard Lane car park fiasco is being investigated by district councillors, it amazes me that there isn't more conversation about the parking situation in the centre of the village.

The parking spaces outside the Co-Op and in The Square are not big enough for modern cars to fit in (please don't think I'm driving round in a Range Rover, I drive a small hatchback), especially if you are injured, elderly or have a young child to get in or out. It seems like only the slimmest of folk will be able to shimmy in or out of their cars.

This may be controversial but will it ever be considered to reduce the spaces slightly to make them larger? Though I realise that this poses another problem of even fewer spaces to park in - which is already too scarce.

The two massive disabled spaces outside the Co-Op are not often both in use, I wonder if one of these could be a parent and child space instead?

Tight for space, Alvechurch

Patchy ground

Dear Editor – Walking up Bear Hill, there are tarmac patches all the way up as far as St Laurence Close, making this stretch of pavement very unstable for elderly people to walk on.

In comparison it appears that the council have resurfaced the footpath from Alvechurch FC on Redditch Road to The Holloway, where hardly anybody walks regularly, unlike a path in the centre of Alvechruch.

Michael Lewis, Alvechurch

Have your say . . . about anything!

email: editor@villageonline.co.uk

Please include your name and address – even if you request them to be withheld from publication.
We reserve the right to edit submissions for reasons of space or legality.
The deadline for the next issue is May 14th 2025.

WHERE'S VINNY?

EIGHT-year-old Annabel Newberry, from Alvechurch and a pupil at Crown Meadow First School, shows off the Mini Vinny she won for finding the little creature in April's hunt the hedgehog competition.

If you want to win one for yourself, you'll need to try to find the little hedgehog hiding somewhere in this magazine (the one shown above is just a guide).

Tell us where he's hiding via email – see details on the bottom of the page opposite – and please include your name, age, address and phone number, and we'll draw a winner at random.

The closing date for the May competition is midnight on 12 May 2025. We'll let you know if you've won and you can collect your Mini Vinny from our office – and pose for a photo with your prize!

Lickey & Blackwell Parish Council News

Annual Report 2025

Message from the Chairman

A Busy Year for the Parish Council: Progress, Challenges, and Change

As we reflect on the past year, it is evident that the Parish Council has been at the heart of many key developments and challenges within our community. From improving local facilities to navigating changes in governance and planning policies, the council has worked tirelessly to ensure the needs of our residents are met.

One of our major undertakings this year has been the long-anticipated upgrade to the play area in Blackwell, with the help of government funding.

Beyond infrastructure, the Council remains committed to addressing the broader needs of the community. Whether it is supporting local initiatives, ensuring essential services are maintained, or representing the interests of our parishioners, we continue to place the well-being of our residents at the forefront of our work.

However, this year has also brought challenges. One of the most significant changes will be the shift brought about by devolution and the introduction of Unitary Authorities which will require us to work closely with our counterparts at county level to safeguard local interests. While we adapt to this evolving landscape, we remain vigilant in ensuring that our parish retains its voice and that local priorities are not overlooked.

This year has also seen a heartfelt farewell to a long-standing councillor, Nick Forknell. We also welcome two community-minded members to the council: David Beattie and Kamalpreet Singh.

Despite the challenges, the council remains steadfast in its commitment to the community. We thank all residents for their continued support and engagement and look forward to working together to make the coming year just as productive and fulfilling.

Cllr Bakul Kumar

Christmas celebrations held in Lickey.

Nick Forknell

Cllr Nick Forknell (pictured) began his journey as a Councillor in 2012. In 2013, he became the Chair of the Neighbourhood Plan Committee, leading to the adoption of the Neighbourhood Development Plan by the Parish Council.

In 2016, Nick took over as the Chair of the Parish Council and served in this role until 2021, contributing significantly to the democratic process in Lickey and Blackwell Parish Council.

He continued to be the councillor responsible for Highways, playing a crucial role in road repairs and safety. Nick will be remembered as a highly capable councillor and a good friend of the community.

Finance Report

The audited summary of receipts and payments for the year ending 31st March 2024 is shown here, with the 2022/23 figures for comparison.

Income

Receipts were £30,701 higher than in 2022/23, although most of this increase is explained by the early receipt of the first instalment of the 2024/25 precept (£27,500) from Bromsgrove District Council, which was not due until April 2024.

In addition, increases in interest rates meant that the interest we received on our bank account was higher in 2023/24 than in previous years.

Expenditure

We spent £1,570 more than in 2022/23, with increased spend on the play area and open spaces in particular.

This is our biggest area of activity in terms of spending and includes maintenance of the play area in Blackwell (including some new fencing in 2022/23), mowing and planting.

We also spent more on our community events, which include the Christmas tree lighting events and competition, the Best Front Garden competition and the Afternoon Tea for older residents, plus support for the Blackwell Gentle Walk programme and the Blackwell Festival.

The net position for the year was a surplus of £29,122, which was contributed to the Council's unallocated reserves.

The above statements represent fairly the financial position of the Council for the year ended 31st March 2024.

For 2025/26 we have set a precept of £55,000, which is unchanged from the previous year. We are planning some exciting community events, with a particular focus on the environment this year, so look out for those. We are always open to applications for financial support from local community groups and organisations. We have a budget of £3,000 for such grants in 2025/26, so please spread the word and get in touch if your group would like to apply for funding.

Cllr Anna Boehm

Communications Group Report

Parish best front garden first prize winners are awarded.

Another fabulous year of events — thanks to each one of you who attended and contributed to making them a huge success.

This year we held two Christmas celebrations, with mince pies and visits from Santa. In Lickey, we had songs from the Lickey Hills Primary School & Nursery choir, and music from the Blackwell Concert Band.

We had our biggest ever number of entrants to our Christmas Card Competition this year: 92 from Lickey and 20 from Blackwell. Archie Hurcombe was our overall winner with an outstanding Christmas Jumper design, and the top 14 children who entered all enjoyed a small prize too.

Our Parish best front garden competition produced some great winners again this year. The first place large garden prize winners were Mr and Mrs Suggett, from Blackwell. First prize in the small/medium category went to Blackwell resident Alison Shingles.

The Resident's Afternoon Tea was very well attended at Blackwell Community Hall in May. We had a fantastic few hours with great food, interesting talks and lots of singing too.

This year we published our annual report and three further updates in *The Village* magazine. All past and forthcoming event information can also be found on our website and Facebook page. Let us know your views!

Cllr Bernice Jones
Communications Group Lead

2022/23 (£)	RECEIPTS	2023/24 (£)
50,000	Precept	77,500
748	Grants	0
922	Interest received	2,369
1,661	VAT refunds	4,285
2,504	Lengthsman	2,469
87	Other income	0
55,922	**TOTAL**	**86,623**
	PAYMENTS	
9,310	General administration	8,390
13,533	Salaries & staff expenses	16,454
9,489	Play areas & open spaces	13,901
4,801	Community events	4,125
1,000	Donations & grants	1,500
7,300	Highways & litter picking	4,473
2,573	Cemetery maintenance	2,983
816	Health, wellbeing & safety	0
3,351	Newsletter	2,180
3,757	VAT paid	3,494
55,931	**TOTAL**	**57,501**
-9	**Surplus/(deficit)**	**29,122**

An audited summary of receipts and payments for the years 2022/23 and 2023/24 to March 31.

Environment Group Report

We recognise the importance of safe, accessible, and engaging spaces for children and families, and significant efforts have gone into planning and implementing these improvements. The upgraded play area will offer better facilities and a more inclusive environment, ensuring that our younger residents have a space to enjoy for years to come.

As part of this initiative, children from Blackwell First School helped enhance the area by planting wildflower bulbs nearby, which will bring a burst of colour and joy to the space in the coming seasons, attracting pollinators like bees and butterflies.

As part of our efforts to enhance public spaces, new benches have been allocated to Old Birmingham Road and Pocket Park in Linthurst Newtown. These will provide much-needed resting spots for residents and visitors alike, encouraging outdoor activity and community interaction.

The Footpath Warden has worked hard to ensure that overgrown vegetation along parish footpaths has been cleared, improving accessibility for walkers.

Additionally, old stiles have been replaced with gates, making footpaths more user-friendly for residents of all ages. These improvements contribute to the enjoyment

and preservation of our rural surroundings.

In the summer, the Parish Council will be organising a Biodiversity and Eco-Friendly Day to raise awareness about local wildlife and encourage sustainable practices within the community.

This event will provide residents with practical advice and resources on eco-friendly living, from gardening for biodiversity to reducing household waste. We encourage everyone to take part and help us make our parish a greener, more sustainable place to live.

Cllr Dr Bakul Kumar
Environment Group Lead

Highways Report

Roadworks have been a significant issue for many residents over the past year, with multiple road closures to replace corroding utility pipes with more durable plastic alternatives. Additionally, resurfacing works were carried out to improve road conditions. However, the lack of coordination between closures caused inconvenience for many, and we will continue to push for better planning in future projects to minimise disruption.

Cllr Dr Bakul Kumar
Highways Group Lead

Planning Report

The Planning Committee has met regularly throughout the year to review and discuss new applications, ensuring that development aligns with the needs and character of our parish.

However, new challenges have emerged with the introduction of the "grey belt" concept within the green belt, raising concerns about potential impacts on our local environment and planning policies.

Additionally, the sale of the Cropwood Estate has introduced further complexities, prompting discussions about the future use of the site and its effect on the community. The committee remains committed to carefully evaluating all proposals to safeguard the best interests of residents and the parish. We urge residents to stay informed and engaged as we navigate these important decisions.

The upgraded play area in Blackwell, opposite Blackwell First School.

Green fields in Blackwell's green belt.

	New Build	Extensions	Garage	Heat Source Pump
No objection	2	12	2	1
Objection	4	4	0	0

Applications and outcomes for building in the parish 2024/2025 .

The breakdown of applications and their outcome is detailed above (April 2024-March 2025).

Cllr Dr Bakul Kumar
Planning Committee Chairman

North Bromsgrove Footpath Working Party - Lickey and Blackwell

Our recent activities in the parish have been varied, including fitting steps and replacing a boardwalk by Spirehouse Lane, replacing broken stiles with a pedestrian and kissing gate, as well as levelling a path between Greenhill and Blackwell Lane and widening a footpath by clearing vegetation in Burcot. We have also been fitting waymark posts, clearing ditch crossings and opening up blocked public rights of way.

If you'd like to get involved, meet like-minded people and help preserve our beautiful walking routes, we'd love to hear from you!

We meet at 9.45am on the third Tuesday of every month to carry out essential tasks such as waymarking, clearing vegetation, and making basic repairs.

Whether supervised by Worcestershire County Council's Public Rights of Way officers or working independently, we always have a great time enjoying the fresh air while making a real difference.

Our work covers the parishes of Catshill and North Marlbrook, Lickey and Blackwell, and Bournheath, and we are supported by the County Council with training, advice, and materials.

Find out more:
Facebook: facebook.com/groups/northbromsgroveprow
Website: walks.catshill.com/footpath-work-party
Contact: Brett Laniosh — b.laniosh@catshillandnorthmarlbrook-pc.gov.uk
Come along and make a difference — one step at a time!

Fitting a kissing gate on the Monarch's Way.

Blackwell First School

Another year has flown by at Blackwell First School! We welcomed new children and families into our Reception Class and Nursery in September and enjoyed super "Sponsored Mile" and "Scarecrow Festival" events during the autumn.

The lead-up to Christmas saw the children in Years 3 and 4 visiting the Hippodrome to watch "The Nutcracker" and then perform their own version. They were both spectacular!

Blackwell First School sports day.

The younger children enjoyed performing the Nativity to their families, which is always a special event. A visit from Father Christmas was the most important part of our Christmas Fair and Story Night.

During the spring term, the children have "travelled the world", visited a variety of places of worship and read lots and lots of new books. Teachers and their classes have written to the authors of their books and enjoyed reading the wonderful replies, even having "Zoom" conversations with some authors. Allan Drummond and Lane Smith took the time to "Zoom in" and the children were delighted. This term ends with some lovely "Singing on the Steps" as a way of celebrating the end of term.

Moving into the summer term, the children will all take part in Sports Day and our Leavers' Assembly for Year 4 children. Bellboating and the Year 4 residential are also highlights of this next term. As part of the "Blackwell Fringe" event in the village, the school choir will sing in St Catherine's at 11am on May 10th and a Ceilidh will brighten up the day in the school hall.

Many thanks from the staff and children to the village, PFTA and volunteer helpers. We couldn't do it without you all. Thank you.

Anna Moss
Headteacher

Lickey Hills Primary School and Nursery

As we reflect over the past year, it continues to be such a busy and exciting time at Lickey Hills Primary School and Nursery. Summer term ended with sports days, our wonderful Year 6 production of "The Lion King" and we enjoyed our first Colour Run fundraiser, organised by our incredible PTA.

We welcomed new children and families for the autumn term and enjoyed many amazing opportunities, including a visit from Bromsgrove Fire Service for our Reception children, a collaborative Key Stage 1 Arts and Craft event with some residents from Cofton Manor Care Home and a whole school Chinese Dance Workshop. The term ended with our youngest children's heartwarming "Songs Around the Christmas Tree" performance; many proud parents watched on as Key Stage 1 excelled in their Christmas performance of "A Stable Boy!" and Key Stage 2 sang beautifully in their carol service.

Spring term has seen the continuation of our parental engagement sessions where each year group welcomed parents into school to work alongside their child to demonstrate how they can best support them at home in literacy and mathematics. We have been fortunate to bring our learning to life with many visits and visitors, including a day at the Black Country Living Museum, a trip to Bishops Wood and a very fun day at the Think Tank.

We are so blessed to have the Lickey Hills on our doorstep, and each year group enjoys a yearly visit, learning about our immediate locality, becoming respectful global citizens and demonstrating care and concern for our local environment. Many classes have visited places of worship, including Lickey Church, Worcester Cathedral and a Mandir.

As we move into the summer term, we look forward to educational visits to West Midlands Safari Park, Twycross Zoo and our residential trip to PGL.

A particular highlight this year will of course be the revealing of our "bull", as we have the privilege of being a part of the Birmingham "Bulls in the City 2025" arts trail. It has brought much excitement and is a great opportunity to bring our community together — not to mention being able to support Birmingham Hospice. Everyone at Lickey Hills Primary School would like to thank our families and community for their support. We look forward to another successful and happy year at school.

Helen Williams
Deputy Headteacher

Blackwell Community Hall

Almost a year since Muntjacs Café opened at the hall, and what a year! Thank you to all our wonderful

customers; we love to see the café filled with people and have made so many new friends. But we're rarely too full; there have only been a couple of occasions where there's not been a spare seat.

Come along and try our freshly ground coffee, tea, assorted chilled drinks, teacakes, locally made cakes, and occasional other specials. We open 10am-2pm on Saturdays every week. Thank you also to our fabulous team of over 20 volunteers; we're a "not for profit" organisation and they all work for nothing. If you'd like to volunteer, please get in touch or pop into the café and speak to one of our committee.

The success of the café, together with a grant from the Parish Council, has enabled us to invest in 50 new chairs — ones that are easily stackable, as our storage space is limited.

The hall is run to benefit the residents of Blackwell and neighbouring areas. Please support it in any way you can, whether that be visiting the café, attending the various groups and classes that hire it, or booking the hall for your own event.

Connect with us via Facebook or our website:
www.blackwellcommunityhall.co.uk
You can also email us at:
BCHblackwell@gmail.com

Blackwell Festival Charity

After another successful year in 2024, Blackwell Festival Charity is proud to announce a brand-new free festival.

Blackwell Fringe will take place in May 2025 from Friday 9th to Sunday 11th, showcasing the very best of local talent with performances and exhibitions including song and dance, music and poetry, comedy and art.

There will be a schedule of events at the village's four main venues — from the First School and St Catherine's Church to Blackwell Club and the Community Hall. Details are at: www.facebook.com/BlackwellFestival.

Our two well-established festivals were once again very well supported by the local community during the last year.

The success of September's music festival was impressive, considering there was a competing event in Barnt Green and some of the worst weather

A range of choirs and acts perform at Blackwell Music Festival.

Villagers enjoy Blackwell Music Festival regardless of the weather.

conditions in recent years — forcing the lead singer of the headline band to switch her stilettos for pumps!

Seven groups performed on the Festival Field stage including the well-received Got2Sing choir, the first time the event has booked such an act. Nearly 1000 people braved the rain and enjoyed a splendid community event as well as some of the cheapest festival beer available!

The free summer festival on Blackwell School field continued the popular village fayre theme from the previous year with a series of children's games and a live band finishing off proceedings.

This year's summer festival will take place on June 21st, with the music festival rocking the village on September 6th.

The charity remains grateful for the continued financial support of Lickey and Blackwell Parish Council.

The Lickey Community Group

This year we are pleased to be celebrating our 25th anniversary and, as a relatively active group, we try to keep a weatherly eye on the local area.

Avril and Mike on the new bench with their dog Roxy. *Image/Keith Woolford*

Previous and current missions include the Marlbrook Tip and its associated "reservoir", the ongoing issue of discourteous/illegal parking/speeding on Old Birmingham Road near the Lickey School, and parking charges in the country park and the potential of more vehicles being pushed on to surrounding residential roads.

We've assisted in working parties in the cemetery, where members Sue and Roy have taken on the responsibility of cleaning the war graves, donated trees, and encouraged the PC to install a bench for walkers (see picture).

With the dreadful neglect and vandalism of the Bilbury Hill Centre, our latest endeavour is to assist councillors painting over the graffiti.

We wish to make High House Wood as secure as possible now that it is owned by developers and ask anyone who has used this lovely amenity to complete a form to ensure that Rights of Way are recorded – see our website.

Our AGM is being held in May, and we invite those interested in our beautiful location to join us.

Keith Woolford
Lickey Hills Community Group Chair

Lickey WI members meet author Rachel McLean at Bromsgrove Library

Lickey WI

Lickey WI was founded in July 1964, so last year we proudly celebrated our 60th anniversary. The highlight was when the BBC news programme Midlands Today — who were also celebrating their 60th anniversary — came along especially to meet us. Members were fascinated to see how filming was done and how the visit was condensed from almost two hours into less than a minute on-screen. It was very exciting to see ourselves on TV.

Over the summer we celebrated with Afternoon Tea at a local restaurant and held another Tea in the garden of our President. Members of neighbouring WIs were invited to our July meeting when supper was served, along with the anniversary celebration cake, made and decorated by two Lickey WI members.

Over the last year we have heard interesting talks including one about Richard Nixon on the anniversary of Watergate, a talk from the vicar of Holy Trinity, Lickey about the 11-day conference she attended at Windsor Castle and a talk from the Fire Service on safety in the home. In April, members are looking forward to a coach trip to London, which we have organised for a conducted tour around the Houses of Parliament.

We meet on the first Tuesday evening of the month and also have a book club and lunch outings. We're a really friendly WI who always welcome new members.

For more information, ring Jenny Ryder on 0121 445 1872, email lickeywi@gmail.com or visit our website www.lickeywi.wordpress.com or our Facebook page.

The Lickey Hills Society

2024 marked the 40th Anniversary of the Society, which first met on November 5th 1984. At our AGM in November, we had an illustrated presentation of our past achievements and activities. One such activity is our weekly guided walk, introduced in June 2014. The walks start at 10.30am every Thursday, starting and finishing at the Visitor Centre, and lasts about an hour. They are free; just turn up, no need to book.

Our information board — "Trams to the Lickeys and the old Rednal Village" — was unveiled last April. The board is located to the rear of Lai Ling restaurant close to the only original in-situ section of Birmingham tram track. Members have worked for several years to conserve this track.

Birmingham City Council's financial situation has resulted in major changes to the Ranger Service, which is no longer able to support volunteer groups. The Habitat Heroes are an amazing group of volunteers who have worked weekly for 14 years on the Lickeys under the supervision of the Rangers. This support was withdrawn in May 2024. The Society stepped in to provide the support needed for the group to continue, organising insurance cover and funding first aid training and additional equipment. The Heroes are now limited to "light habitat maintenance", but they continue to meet weekly to do vital work which otherwise would not be done.

The Society organised the popular Wassail in January. It was well supported with about 250 people attending, including family groups and children. It proved to be a most enjoyable occasion for which the Society received many positive and grateful comments.

We have spent 40 years supporting the Rangers and the Country Park, which is even more important in the current situation. The Society will continue our work to protect and enhance the Lickeys.

The Lickey Hills Local History Society

Our season started with the Heritage Weekend in September, part of the national Heritage Open Days scheme. We collected more memories of the Lickeys, and ran children's activities.

The Bilberry Hilll Gun Proof Range at the Heritage weekend. *Image/Keith Woolford.*

The displays were on the "Routes, Networks, Connections theme" — our local roads and trackways, canals and railways.

We also covered the history of the Country Park, the first trams to Rednal 100 years ago, Tolkien, local D-Day connections, Elijah Walton's watercolours of the area, a workhouse matron, a murder and an IRA bomb plot.

Warren Lane Quarry was open, where our guides explained the site's geology and the history of the WWI gun proof range. We again held four guided walks: two round the WWI and WWII sites led by Steve Hinton, the Ranger Services Manager; a geology walk by the Geo-champions; and a Lickey Hilltop History walk by our members.

Our programme of meetings in the Trinity Centre continued with talks on: Feckenham's moated manorial site; The Gunpowder Plot, a Midlands Rising; The Bromsgrove Guild in the West Midlands; From Christmas Past to Christmas Present; Barnt Green Houses; The History of the Lock-up – West Midlands Police Museum; Palaces for the People – the Story of Prefabs. On April 15th our talk will be on Bromsgrove on the Home Front.

Our outing this year was to Kevin Thomas's walking tour, "The Secret History of Birmingham Streets", which was much appreciated by members. Our guide was knowledgeable and gave us a fascinating insight into the city's history.

Our research group is currently working on displays for this year's Heritage Weekend on 20th and 21st September at the Visitor Centre in Warren Lane. This will be free and open to everyone.
Contact: info@lhlhs.org.uk
Website: www.lhlhs.org.uk

Alvechurch Parish Council
serving Alvechurch, Bordesley, Forhill, Hopwood, Rowney Green and Weatheroak

Parish news

Synopsis of Alvechurch Parish Council's Chairman's Annual Report – March 2025

The Parish Council continues to promote and foster good and close relationships with our three District Cllrs and County Cllr. It's important it does so as it is only through collaboration we will ensure the best results for our community. After all, we all have the same shared goals and mandate from our residents.

As I stated last year, many of the local issues raised by residents with the Parish Council fall under the remit and responsibility of either Worcestershire County Council or Bromsgrove District Council. As a result, APC is often championing these issues, on behalf of residents, through our respective County or District Cllrs. We're all aware that there's to be a restructuring of local government in the near future and regardless of what exactly the final format of that will be, it will still result in a new relationship having to be nurtured and developed with the newly elected Member at the appropriate time.

I also want to report that our new MP does and has kept an interest in local matters and especially those issues important to the Parish Council. This has been enabled through several informal meetings as and when mutually convenient to meet locally. His offer of support on any issue has always been volunteered, and APC is grateful for that.

It gives me much pleasure to report that APC continues to support local groups with financial grants.

One group that deserves a special mention are those running 'The Larder'. Its success is making a huge difference to those in our community deserving and benefitting from their service.

Last year I reported on five important subjects, they are:

Rowney Green Pavilion & Playing Fields

I would wish to again recognise and applaud the continued investment of time being put in by local residents to improve and manage the playing fields and Pavilion in Rowney Green.

Pathway Lighting Upgrade

This last year has allowed further assessment of the savings generated by the upgrade.

In simple terms, the savings cover the annual cost of APC's maintenance contract with a specialist lighting contractor.

Sale of APC's Gravel Pit in Rowney Green

The proceeds of the sale of the Gravel Pit still remain earmarked for new or additional allotments.

Parish Council's Finances

It's a pleasure again to report the Council's finances remain healthy due to good governance, shrewd and planned budgeting, despite inflationary pressures generally being experienced throughout all sectors in the UK.

Provision of a Permanent Home for a Post Office Service

At the time of writing this, I'm hopeful of some positive news being released soon on the subject.

General

The Council was instrumental in organising, once again, a successful Christmas Lights 'Switch On' in the centre of the village.

Likewise, in November, APC was proud to have contributed and play a part in the solemn and dignified Remembrance service held on the village green which attracted so many residents.

In May VE-Day Community celebrations are being planned to take place at the Cricket Club.

APC remains committed to helping the organisers of Picnic in the Park to make this yearly event so enjoyable for hundreds of residents and visitors to our Parish.

A review of the Council's website is taking place with a view to updating and simplifying its use for those wanting information pertinent to the Parish and the Council's work.

After many years of APC campaigning, and more recently with the dedicated and concerted efforts of local residents through the Bordesley Matters group, it is welcome news that a speed reduction to 30mph through Bordesley is now being consulted on by County Highways.

Community initiatives

As I reported last year, Parish Councillors and its Officers are continually and actively involved in numerous and varied issues. Some of these relate to various drainage issues in our Parish, the upkeep of our main two assets; Hopwood Community Centre, The Wiggin and its playing field. It has also made representations regarding numerous planning applications and resulting decisions.

In addition, the Council keeps promoting the need for improvements to our railway station car park with all stakeholders, but in particular the County Council and Network Rail, as well as campaigning hard for speed reductions on roads throughout our Parish.

This last year, APC secured grants which have been used for some significant improvements; installation of solar panels at Hopwood Community Centre and the refurbishment of The Wiggin Memorial Gates.

Two new important issues

The first is that I'm sure most of us are aware of the Government's devolution plans and the promotion of Unitary Authorities replacing County and District Councils. There's much debate on what form that will take in and for Worcestershire. That will be for others to decide. The reason I raise this is because between now and the 1st April 2028 when the new authority comes into effect, there will be new challenges and opportunities for the Parish Council to both deal with and consider. I'm sure our Parish Council will embrace this extra responsibility and use its best endeavours to lobby hard and champion local issues of importance to the Parish as from April 2028.

The second, and currently most important issue I want to raise, relates to new housing in our Parish as a result of the District Council's long-awaited review of the Green Belt and Call for Sites.

The lack of clarity and certainty from the District Council, and in particular the Strategic Planners, has inevitably provoked speculation resulting in generating concern that our Parish may be subject to a significant new housing allocation. This may well be the case, but until details are released it remains no more than speculation. Concerns about new housing in our Parish took on greater importance since our new Government revealed their desire to speed up the planning process and deliver substantial new housing throughout the UK over the next 5 years. In Bromsgrove District an additional **9,000** new homes need to be provided by the year **2041**. It's important to stress that this is as a result of a projected population increase over that period in our District of 11.4% which is twice the national average!

It is unrealistic to expect for most of this new housing to be centred in or around Bromsgrove. As a result, there will be greater pressure put on larger Parishes in our District to share some of the responsibility to accommodate a proportion of the new housing requirement. Those larger Parishes are Wythall, Hagley and Alvechurch. Combine this with having good rail and road links makes Alvechurch Parish, from a strategic planner's point of view, a good candidate for new housing.

The Parish Council recognised the implications on our Parish of what might emerge from the Green Belt review, and engaged the services of a professional planning consultant back in March last year. The remit was to advise, guide and make representations to BDC's Strategic Planners on behalf of APC as part of a review to update and strengthen our Neighbourhood Plan (NP). It's important to point out that our current Neighbourhood Plan is an excellent document. Its policies and requirements comprehensively cover everything that our residents would probably still consider to be the key issues needing to be addressed as part of any new housing in our Parish.

So after discussion, the consensus was that it would be more advantageous for APC to progress the Parish's best interests in four ways.

These were:

1. **To make representations to BDC's Strategic Planning Team pointing out the importance and validity of our Neighbourhood Plan, its policies and content relating to future new housing in the Parish. This was to include a request for a meeting and engage in discussion to explore what common ground may exist between both Councils.**
2. **In collaboration with our three District Cllrs to push for a meeting with BDC's Strategic Planners. This would allow us to make the point that lack of clarity on what may be forthcoming is not conducive to a mutually beneficial and trusting working relationship. Imposing new housing requirements on any community is likely to be immediately resented, resisted and rejected.**
3. **For APC to devise and launch a full consultation with all residents of their expectations and preferences when it comes to new housing and release**

Alvechurch Parish Council Balance Sheet 31 March 2025

(Last) year ended 31 March 2024 £		*(Current) year ended 31 March 2025* £
	CURRENT ASSETS	
	Stocks and stores	
	Work in progress	
	Debtors (Net of provision for doubtful debts)	
	Prepayments	
4,546.54	VAT recoverable	11,555.69
	Temporary lendings (investments)	
259,312.13	Cash in hand	151,319.57
263,858.67	**TOTAL ASSETS**	162,875.26
	CURRENT LIABILITIES	
111,370.00	Creditors	
152,488.67	**NET ASSETS**	**162,875.26**
	Represented by:	
29,823.77	General fund balance	31,919.36
	Reserves:	
	Capital	
122,664.90	Earmarked	130,955.90
	Adjustments	
152,488.67		**162,875.26**

The above statement represents fairly the financial position of the council as at 31 March 2025 **[Unaudited Y/E Accounts; awaiting External Auditor Review]**

of land for new employment opportunities. This would be a repeat of the original consultations carried out over a decade ago but updated to reflect current trends and changes in our Parish.

4. **For APC to carry out its own SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis of key possible sites being promoted by developers through BDC's 'Call for Sites'.**

I can report that our District Cllrs are working hard to facilitate a meeting with BDC's Strategic Planning team which we will jointly attend.

Having made initial representations to BDC and now actively pursuing a meeting with the Strategic Planning team, APC will be focusing on its most important task for this year. That's to lead on a full consultation of residents on a range of subjects allied to future development in our Parish, their aspirations and requirements over the next decade and further into the future. This is all in line with the Council's statement included in the March edition of The Village magazine headed 'The future of Alvechurch Parish'.

Every effort will be made to identify, develop and prepare what is to be covered by the consultation and start the process as soon as possible with the resources and time available to the Parish Council. This process may also be influenced by what information is gleaned from a meeting with the Strategic Planners, which is why this too remains another priority to arrange.

In the meantime, my request is that residents throughout our Parish start to think and discuss with their family members and friends what they see as being their priorities for the future of Alvechurch Parish. I offer the following questions to provoke those initial discussions:

a. How much new housing would you want or see as being appropriate?

b. Where would you see being the most appropriate location for any new housing?

c. What type of housing, if any, is needed?

d. Should land in the Parish be dedicated for new employment opportunities?

e. What would be your priorities when it comes to requiring additional or enhanced facilities, such as, medical facilities, school places, amenity space, playgrounds, improved canal paths, as an example?

f. How important is it to you to have public transport or road or rail improvements forming part of any increase in housing numbers?

g. Should new retail opportunities form part of any enlargement of Alvechurch village with enhanced parking provision?

Finally, rest assured, and I'm sure I speak on behalf of my fellow Cllrs, the Parish Council recognises the importance of the task ahead to ensure the needs and desires of our residents are represented at every level and opportunity throughout the exercise the District Council's Strategic Planners are carrying out. The future of our Parish for generations to come is at stake.

... and finally,

The Parish Council remains committed to act in the best interests of all residents.

There's an opportunity at each of our meetings to raise any point relating to any agenda item which you feel is of importance to our Parish or you personally. If you can't attend one of our formal meetings, then please do use the opportunities offered to voice your opinions, concerns or suggestions at one of our 'Cllr Surgeries'.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank my fellow Parish Councillors for their continued hard work and time, freely given. We're grateful too for the hard work and representation of Parish interests by our three District Councillors and our County Councillor, Aled Luckman, who is not standing in May's elections, for his contribution and continual support on a range of issues in our Parish over the past year. I also wish to thank our Officers and Caretaker for their dedication, commitment and hard work over the past year for their services are often taken for granted and sometimes go unnoticed, but are fundamental to the smooth and efficient running of the Council.

It is, and remains, an honour and privilege to serve our community in some small way.

(Please refer to the Annual Meeting Report to read this report and others in full)

Cllr Marc Worrall – Chairman
Alvechurch Parish Council

Useful contacts

Alvechurch Village

Peter Freeman
Sue Lambert
Tony Williams
Keith Wiseman
Marc Worrall
Nigel Cuttress
Ruth Clarke

Hopwood

Paul Edwards

Rowney Green and Bordesley

Stephen Hornsby
Barry Thornton

Have your say

We're keen to receive your comments or queries; do please contact the Parish Office if you wish to discuss any matter.

APC office

Jayne Smailes
Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer
clerk@alvechurch.gov.uk

Fay Murphy
Assistant Clerk
assistantclerk@alvechurch.gov.uk

Call us on
0121 447 8016
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clerk@alvechurch.gov.uk
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ALVECHURCH PARISH COUNCIL

General Handy Person/ Caretaker Vacancy

Salary £25,992 – £27,711/pa (pro-rata) subject to experience and qualifications, plus workplace pension, essential car user allowance, 23 days annual leave/bank holidays (pro-rata).

Flexible hours and overtime subject to work requirements.

Alvechurch Parish Council is seeking a General Handy Person/ Caretaker to join their small team that supports the Councillors in the 'day to day' running of the Parish. Alvechurch Parish Council provides a range of services within the Parish including; parks, play provision, sports facilities, allotments and a community centre. We are looking for an all-round, practical, handy person with good experience in general maintenance and repairs.

This is a very hands-on role and every day will be different.

Duties

- Perform general maintenance tasks, to include park equipment and surfaces
- Undertake visual checks of play equipment
- Litter picking (as necessary)
- Bus Shelter maintenance
- Minor repairs and decoration of council buildings
- Replenishing grit bins

Ideally you will have experience in carrying out DIY maintenance work to high standard, knowledge of power tools, the ability to solve basic maintenance issues, and the ability to undertake heavy manual work. **Training will be provided as well as appropriate PPE.**

This is a part-time role consisting of initially, 15 hours per week over five days – Monday to Friday, with occasional evening/weekend attendance required to cover community events **(working pattern/increase in hours will be subject to negotiation)**.

Please note – the role requires a high degree of flexibility that will require you to work/represent the Parish Council around the whole of the Parish of Alvechurch.

If you wish to join a small friendly team, are enthusiastic, with good interpersonal skills and you are able to work with minimal supervision, please contact the Parish Clerk via email – clerk@alvechurch.gov.uk for further information/an Application Pack.

[Whilst the following position is offered as an employed post, the Parish Council will also consider applications from self-employed/ sole traders (on a negotiable rate basis)].

Closing date for application forms is Friday 30th May. Interviews will be arranged on a rolling basis and for this reason APC reserve the right to close the advertisement earlier than the date shown.

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LET'S GO ZERO

PUPILS from St Andrew's First School's Eco Team (pictured above with Umbreen Akhbar, lunchtime supervisor) launched the school's commitment to the "Let's Go Zero" national initiative.

Head Teacher, Mrs Barnes, explained that the school is making every effort to reduce its carbon to zero by 2030.

Each classroom and the dinner hall now has a food waste bin and Worcestershire County Council is providing weekly food waste collections.

ST MICHAEL'S Church in Cofton Hackett had more than 300 visitors over their Daffodil Weekend, from local residents to rambling groups and a cycling club from Solihull, who all enjoyed the churchyard's display of naturalised daffodils and wildflowers.

A range of fantastic cakes and hot drinks were available for visitors as well as the opportunity to explore the church and its grounds.

Jon Hall, Chairman of the Organising Committee, said: "We were delighted with the response to the weekend and would like to thank all of the visitors for their support and donations. We also want to thank all of the volunteers who made sure the church and churchyard were looking their best, and the Daffodil Ladies who prepared and served all of the tasty cakes and hot drinks that were available. We look forward to making the Daffodil Weekend an annual Spring event."

The church raised £1,200 from the event, which will be shared between the Church's Grounds Maintenance Fund and the Marie Curie charity.

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Warren Buffett - "Be fearful when others are greedy and be greedy only when others are fearful."

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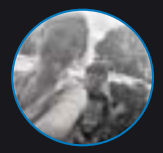

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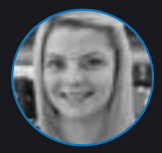

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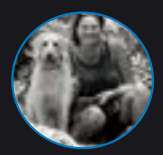

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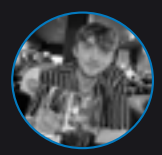

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INVESTMENT ROLLERCOASTER

This month, **Martin Pryor** discusses the key to success in investing, following the recent stock market turbulance.

IN April 2025, global stock markets reacted sharply to a series of bold trade moves by President Donald Trump. On April 2, he announced sweeping new tariffs – a 10% charge on all imported goods, with even higher rates for key trading partners like China and the European Union. These changes, set to take effect a week later, shook investor confidence and triggered widespread market declines.

Major U.S. indexes such as the Dow Jones, S&P 500 and Nasdaq suffered steep losses, with the Dow dropping over 4,000 points in just two days. The turbulence quickly spread worldwide — Japan's Nikkei and Canada's TSX fell significantly, and overall market volatility spiked to levels not seen since 2020.

These sudden policy shifts have made investors nervous, leading to a sell-off in both domestic and international markets. While some temporary exemptions were offered, the overall unpredictability of U.S. trade policy under Trump has left many investors cautious, and markets remain on edge as they await further developments. All of this though is a normal day at the office for worldwide stockmarkets . . .

Three decades ago, at the start of 1995, the S&P 500 (The Great Companies of The USA) was valued at 466. 30 years on, at the end of last year, The Great Companies of The USA were valued at 6,011. In three decades, these Great Companies have grown in value by 1,190%.

But these returns come at a price: to capture them, you have to be prepared to ride an emotional rollercoaster, as stock market returns aren't linear. There will be temporary short-term drops along the way. Despite these fluctuations, the long-term trend has historically been one of steady growth, rewarding those who stay the course.

I remember my first time on the Oblivion ride at Alton Towers. The drop was terrifying and the initial shock was intense, but by the end of the day, I'd ridden it several times—each time growing more accustomed to the thrill. What changed? The ride hadn't changed, it was my perspective that shifted. What had been extremely scary became more familiar.

The ride on the stock market can feel very much the same. Just like riding a roller coaster, investing in the market will always elicit strong emotional responses.

Like the changing of the seasons, every few years, the market will drop by more than 20%. Normally after a sustained period of positive market performance. We don't know when these falls are going to happen, we just know that they will. What is mind boggling is that when it does happen, it is always treated as something extreme, catastrophic or unexpected. Yet they aren't unexpected at all. They are a normal part of the ride, and they are temporary.

The key to success when investing: Stay the course. Ride the ride.

History tells us that the market will reward us over the long term. Investing is something we do with a goal in mind: building wealth for the future, securing our financial freedom, and achieving long-term financial stability.

But reap the benefits only if you don't jump off in the middle of your journey. Imagine if, out of fear, you decided to get out your seat in the middle of your rollercoaster ride (thankfully this is impossible on actual roller coasters due to modern safety equipment). Unfortunately, those same harnesses designed to keep us safe don't exist in the world of investing. Because of this, we see people bailing on the "investment" ride all the time.

And even when you are prepared for what to expect, this is no substitute for the real thing. Once the ride gets rough, fear takes over, and without those harnesses, you risk abandoning your investments at the worst possible time. It's at this time that having a good financial planner will serve as your safety belt. They will keep you in your seat. They will remind you why you are investing in the first place, that you expected this, and assure you that jumping off is always worse than staying the course.

Just like that first terrifying drop on Oblivion, the fear may still hit, but the ups and downs become less intimidating and over time, you learn to expect them, manage them, and trust that they're part of the experience.

When investing always remember to do the opposite of what your instinct tells you to do otherwise you will erode your capital very quickly. Investing is like a bar of soap, the more you touch it, the quicker it disappears.

Martin Pryor
Lifestyle Financial Planner
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This article should not be regarded as personal advice. You should seek independent financial advice to apply these theories to your circumstances.

LEO AND HIS TRIPLETS

Amateur astronomer **Brian Watkiss** peers into the *Village* night sky.

MAY, the last full month of Spring and sunset approaches nine o'clock in the evening. Still, we can probably "Cast a Clout" now.

This is the time to say goodbye to Jupiter as it rides off into the sunset during the course of the month. You can still catch it for the first week or two, just above the glow our star leaves behind on the western horizon.

The bright star Capella, just above and to the right of Jupiter is visible early in the evening, too, although it will be following the giant planet, as will Procyon on the other side.

A little higher are the twins of Gemini with Castor and Pollux at their head. As the sky gets darker, you can find Mars just to the left, still very obvious by its distinct orange colour.

You may remember it being in line with the twins but is now trying desperately not to suffer Jupiter's fate as it races into the constellation of Capricorn, sadly not visible in our skies. Down on its surface, *Perseverance* the rover is still very busy.

It has climbed a small hill named "Witch Hazel Hill" which makes it sound like it's taking a stroll in the Worcestershire countryside. It is now busy drilling into the ancient rocks there and NASA has published a video of it which is suitable viewing when "there's nothing on the telly".

Its largely overshadowed predecessor, *Curiosity* is still busy too and there is a fascinating montage of the 42 holes it has drilled available, too. Back in the sky, the Moon passes close to Mars on the 3rd, possibly the last time we'll see these two together in the evening. To the left, the constellation of Leo is dominating this area of the sky now that that old show-off, Orion has disappeared.

Switch to main screen, Spock: How The Leo Triplet might look on the viewing screen of the *USS Enterprise*? *Image/NASA*

Easily identified by the reverse question mark that is his head, Leo definitely looks like a lion, standing guard high in the sky. At the bottom of the question mark is the bright star, Regulus. A quirky one too, being formed of at least two pairs of stars all circling around each other.

The Moon pays a close visit on the 5th and if you keep an eye on it, you can almost see the Moon moving in its orbit. Looking at about nine o'clock in the evening, the pair are very easy to spot as the Moon will be very bright at this stage and it appears directly above Regulus but look again a couple of hours later and you can see the Moon has moved on in its endless circling of the Earth.

To the rear of Leo, you'll notice his rump is a triangle of stars with Zosma at the top, Chertan below and Denebola at the rear.

Below these is a famous (to astronomers – but they don't get out much) trio of galaxies called "The Leo Triplet".

Too distant to be visible to the naked eye, I do think they look like something out of science fiction. A sight from the viewing screen of the *Enterprise* maybe?

Wild bluebells

THE MERRY MONTH OF MAY

As spring progresses, **Mary Green** delves into the rural folklore of the flora and fauna traditionally associated with this time of year.

THIS month, I am writing this with a little help from my friends, because I have a sight problem. But even I can see how lovely and lush spring has become in April. In the warm, dry weather, everything has caught up and is all blossoming at once.

This year, I'm writing about how wildlife relates to our culture. The month of May has recently acquired a new place, it's called No-Mow May. However, No-Mow May is no good without No-Mow June, July and the rest of the summer. Our insects need continuing flowering throughout.

May Day is one of the few festivals that hasn't been taken over by Christianity. It's an old Pagan festival called Beltane, which heralds the start of summer.

In England, May Day was celebrated with dancing, singing and general merriment; and often

continues overleaf

Hawthorn blossom: Spot it growing along the side of the canal in Alvechurch in springtime.

continues from previous page

with new clothes. Some of this tradition was later transferred to Whitsuntide, later in May. The dancing around the Maypole is mostly a Victorian invention, 'though dancing of a more adult and merry kind was prevalent for centuries before.

The plant most associated with May Day is the hawthorn, commonly called the may tree.

You'll see this flowering all over the place now, with clusters of white, heavily perfumed flowers. The tree was an important one in the ancient Celtic calendar and represented the goddess Brigid in her mature phase. Because of this, it's often seen as connected with fertility and the scent is sometimes said to be sexy.

Boughs of may were often brought into the house to celebrate May Day. The Church of England disapproved of this, and that's why it's now said to be unlucky to bring may into the house.

Above: A close up of hawthorn blossom.

Right: A blackbird sits among ornamental crab apples.

The Catholic Church was more savvy, and associated hawthorn with the Virgin Mary, so it became her tree.

The original hawthorn in this area is called Midland hawthorn, or woodland hawthorn. It's quite rare now, but there is some growing in the middle of Alvechurch. It flowers very early compared with the other one: the common hawthorn.

Image/Dennis Brown

Crab apple blossom: Delicate white and pink flowers.

Common hawthorn was much planted at the time of the Enclosures in the 17th Century and onwards, when landowners began enclosing their fields to protect livestock. So, it is all along our field and road hedges. Bees and butterflies love it, and later in the year, the berries are a favourite food for birds, especially the thrush family.

Another tree blossoming now is the apple. Wild apples, usually called crab-apples, have the same beautiful pink-and-white blossom as orchard apples, but the fruits are very small and quite sour. There are lots in this area, but you may also see 'wilding' apples, which have escaped from orchards and grow in the wild. These are often highly edible.

Apples are so much part of our culture that the word has come almost to represent any fruit. For example, in the Bible, Adam and Eve eat of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, which in English, we call the apple, but it wasn't called that in the Bible. So the apple has become associated with sin, but also with the wonders and beauty of the world.

Crab apples: Find wild apples growing in the area – although you may find them quite sour.

Bluebells: Grow abundantly in some woodland areas.

If you cut an apple in half, you'll see a perfect five-pointed figure where the seeds are. This figure – the Pentagram – had mystical significance in many religions. The apple is associated not only with the Judao-Christian religion but with others. In the Celtic religion, it is one of the trees of life and is especially associated with women.

In more modern times, apples have quite a friendly role in our culture. An apple a day keeps the doctor away. You can bring an apple for your teacher. Even better, you can be the apple of your parents' eyes.

In English folklore, apples play a crucial part in ceremonies like the Wassail, because they are so much used for making cider. Cider and beer were ordinary drinks for most people in medieval and

continues overleaf

continues from previous page

early modern times, and usually low in alcohol so even children drank them. I can remember the children on the farm next-door to us having free access to the cider barrel.

Both apples and hawthorn grow as understorey in woodland, especially ancient woodland.

Underneath them, in May, you will of course find bluebells. The bluebell is one flower that almost everybody recognises, and many woods are referred to bluebell woods, even though the flowers only appear for a short time each year. Perhaps this is because they are a peculiarly British flower. I remember from my youth a song called The Bluebell Polka.

At this time of year, you can visit Peck Wood in Rowney Green, an ancient woodland full of bluebells but also with hawthorn and apple among the huge, ancient oak trees.

Flying above you in May, I hope you'll see swallows. They arrived in April, but in May you may see them nesting. This is usually in the eaves of an old barn, or under a bridge maybe.

They were always seen as a sign of summer, and we have a saying: "One swallow doesn't make a summer!" Swallow gives its name to one of our flowers. It's called the greater celandine, or swallow-wort.

This is not so well known as the lesser celandine, which is very common and which we all saw in March. It's no relation but is actually a member of the poppy family.

Its Latin name is Chelidonium, which is the word for swallow. It was believed swallows used this plant to improve their eyesight.

The plant has a waxy, white secretion which was thought to have curative properties. In fact, it would be very harmful to the eyes because it is abrasive, but it was used very much for curing warts. It grows usually around old houses and is often seen in Alvechurch along Meadow Lane, by the old cottages. I am not going to try it!

A swallow in flight: Soaring through blue skies.
Image/Paul Wilde

May in the old calendar is the first month of summer. The old saying: "Ne-er Cast a Clout 'till May is Out", means keep your winter clothing on until it gets warm. But there is an argument about whether May here means the month or the flower. If it means the flower, you can start undressing now, in early May. If it means the month, you've got to wait a few more weeks!

The month of May makes very clear to me how much I've seen climate change in my lifetime.

When I was a child, you couldn't bring may blossom into the house for May Day because it wasn't out yet. It came out later in the month and was normally in flower for my birthday. The reason may blossom was associated with May Day is because of the earlier calendar, the Julian Calendar, which changed to the Gregorian Calendar in the 18 th Century.

This calendar was two weeks later, so in medieval times hawthorn did blossom for the 1st of May. Now, it blossoms for the 1st of May again, because of our warmer climate.

■ **I wrote this poem a couple of years ago. There are many folk songs and tales where people become animals, showing different aspects of life.**

Shapeshifting

I think I am moving from hare to owl
I ran in the risky meadows, fought alive
Turned to the moon in the green night
Afraid, yes, but bold in my strong limbs
My form in the grass impermanent.
Now I prefer to sit on this oak branch
Eyes forward, watching around me
The moon behind me cool on my feathers.
I have a beak and claws hardened by age
But only use them when I have to.
If I am wise, it's with the folly of the hare.

The anonymous **birder** *How to enjoy village birdlife*

GOOD MIGRATIONS

Why do such small animals rack up so many air miles?

They've made it again,
Which means the globe is still working,
The creation's still waking refreshed,
Our Summer's still all to come.

(from *Swifts*, by Ted Hughes, 1973)

ONE of the best things about spring for anyone interested in nature is the yearly return of migrating birds. The song of the chiffchaff, one of our earliest arrivals first heard in March, is one of those markers that the weather is getting better, the days will soon be longer and, as Ted Hughes reflects above, the planet, although severely stressed, is still working.

Swifts are one the last arrivals of around 50 migrating species that breed in the UK each year, bolstering our resident numbers by millions of birds but then return to their wintering grounds after raising a brood or two. Sand martins, seen last year on one of our walks and thought to be nesting at Lower Bittell, will be here by March with swallows arriving soon after Swifts will arrive on a warm southerly in May, listen for their screaming call, only to be gone again by the end of August.

Some migrants are well known and are very visible: swifts nesting in urban areas with swallows and house martins nesting in rural buildings. There are a few species in the warbler family that are common in our area but many people, including those with an interest in birds, may be unaware of their existence. They are small, blend in to the spring and summer foliage and rely more on their distinctive song for recognition than on colourful plumage. I certainly wasn't aware of them growing up and they do not appear to enjoy the cultural references in stories, songs and poems that many of our resident birds do.

Left: Willow warblers have already been vocal in this area after flying thousands of miles – quite a feat if you only weigh 12g.
Image/JL

This is a shame as their lifecycles and journeys are remarkable. Tiny birds making round trips in the thousands of miles to have young which have to make the trip themselves a few weeks after being born . . . thanks Mom and Dad!

Why do they go to all this trouble, you may wonder? In short, to gain a breeding advantage. Travelling further north to breed will result in less competition for food and breeding partners plus longer daylight hours to allow more time for feeding. The chiffchaff, for example, will winter in south-western Europe or north Africa and then disperse in a northerly and easterly direction across Europe, Ireland and the UK Although some are now resident in the UK, a sign of warming climate.

The blackcap, known as the "northern nightingale" for its complex song, is another visitor that can be heard and possibly seen in gardens and any green space. Willow warbler and whitethroat will also be in our area by the time you read this. These are less garden birds and more likely to be found in woodland and scrub. At the time of writing I've heard quite a few willow warblers.

It is remarkable that both the willow warbler and whitethroat, weighing about 10-13g, will make a round trip from sub-Saharan Africa each year, breeding locally, flying thousands of miles and often returning to the same breeding site over their lifespan.

How they do it is no less incredible, employing a number of strategies and genetic adaptations in order to create their own super advanced satnav systems.

The routes are genetically hard-wired into the first-year migrants which allows them to orientate without the help of the parent birds, that is not to say that birds won't use the help of more experienced birds to guide the way when possible, geese and swans for example.

Many birds are able to detect the earth's magnetic lines which, combined with using the relative positions of the sun and stars, tell them they are moving in the right direction. Like all expert navigators they will memorise key geographical features on the route but take that one step further with an ability to use their sense of smell, particularly in seabirds, using this ability to map the otherwise featureless seascape.

Happy birding at the best time of the year and keep an eye and an ear out for our magical migrants. **JL**

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EXPLOSIONS OF COLOUR

Leighanne Gee tells *The Village* what she's been enjoying in gardens this spring, and gives tips for brightening up your gardens.

WELL wasn't April a treat! Ignoring the odd bit of drizzle, it was mostly bright and warm – perfect weather for gardening and being outdoors.

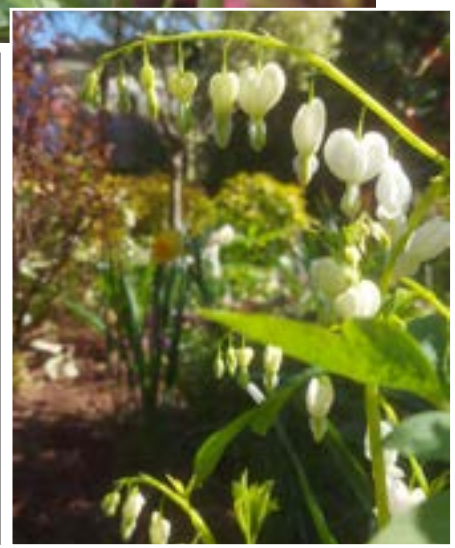
I can't say that that was the case last year. . . with record breaking rainfall, you were more likely to spot me in a bright green waterproof jacket, covered in mud with a mild case of trench foot!

It was tough going on the plants too – the cherry blossoms were battered by the downpours. Camellia and Magnolia flowers browned and turned to mush well before their time. It seemed like only the slugs and snails truly prospered . . . but not this time. Cherry and magnolia trees are still putting on a show, the camellias, rhododendrons and azaleas are lit up in all sorts of colours and the apples and crab-apples seem to be sagging under the weight of their blooms.

Our "free-spirits" are doing well too; violets, primroses, forget-me-nots and bluebells are all out right now. Making the most of those cracks in the path or popping up at the edge of lawns and borders, they can be viewed as weeds or maybe little spring gems – it's all about perspective.

Either way, they're excellent colonisers and will freely seed and spread all over the place – if you're a fan, feel free to enjoy them, if not, get them

Snake's head fritillaries: With their unusual markings.



Lamprocrapnos spectabilis: Dangling, heart-shaped flowers.

out once the flowers fade and before the seeds ripen. Bluebells are trickier to remove, as their brittle stems tend to snap before the bulb can be lifted, patience is required in this endeavour!

Hellebore flowers are fading and will soon be ready to cut back. If you haven't already done so, look for last year's leaves and remove them too. Usually they're thick, leathery and low to the ground – they can be ragged, worn and marked but it's

Vivid, beautiful wisteria.

Apple trees laden with blossom.

Fresh new fern fronds.

not always the case. The new leaves are generally a lighter green, not as leathery, and are held high amongst the flowers, as the season progresses the leaves darken and thicken as they lower and spread out. If you can't tell the difference between the old leaves and the new leaves, don't panic - your hellebore won't have a tantrum and keel over. Left to its own devices, a hellebore will gradually shed the older leaves, our intervention speeds this process up, reduces leaf congestion and makes the most of the plant.

Daffodils and tulips will be going over but there's still a few spring bulbs left to look out for; alliums stand out with white, lilac or purple flowers. They thrive in well-drained soil and full sun, holding up well as a cut flower if you have blooms to spare.

Camassias have spires of blue star flowers and grow best in full sun with slightly damp soil (not waterlogged!). And if you're struggling to find a spring bulb that can tolerate winter wet, look no further than the snake's head fritillary (*Fritillaria meleagris*).

They can be grown in containers, borders or lawns - in full sun or dappled shade. I love them - they're so beautiful; their nodding flowers have snakeskin/checkerboard markings in a sort of burgundy-purple. They look great in a big drift and they're pollinator friendly – what's not to love?

No matter which bulbs take your fancy, when they've finished flowering, allow the foliage to turn yellow and wither before you cut them back. I know they look a bit tragic but removing the leaves while they're still green will affect their performance next spring, so put the snips down, for now.

I spotted another of my favourite plants the other day; *Lamprocapnos spectabilis*, also known as "bleeding hearts" (and previously named Dicentra). It's easily recognisable with its arching stems of dangling pink, heart shaped flowers and fern-like foliage. It's a great choice if you want flowers in a shadier spot – and if you don't like pink, there's a white version called Lamprocapnos "Alba".

On the theme of "shade". . . have you cut back last year's fern fronds? It's not too late if you haven't - whether the crown is still tightly held or if the fronds have started to unfurl, you can still snip away the old leaves and make way for the new growth.

It's always this time of year that I get Wisteria envy – you know when you see an established specimen framing a home, trained neatly under the windowsills and just smothered in flowers?! I know that the flowers are short lived, and they make a bit of a mess when they fall but they're so elegant and graceful. Have a look when you're out and about, you'll see that they come in a subtle range of pastel shades and that some have long slender racemes (flower clusters), while others are much shorter.

If you want to buy a Wisteria, go to a nursery or garden centre and browse through them while they're flowering so you can see exactly what you're buying, sometimes the label images just don't do the flowers justice.

And finally, here's your annual reminder to consider taking part in No-Mow May. We've been conditioned over the years to strive for lawn perfection; no moss, no weeds, just lush, even grass. It may look appealing, but it does little to support our local wildlife.

Long grass creates habitat and a food source to all sorts of insect species during a crucial time in their life cycles. I'm not suggesting a 100% conversion – it could be a small patch, a circle, kidney shape, a narrow strip at the bottom of the garden. Maybe an awkward corner that you struggle to keep neat or maybe you've got fruit trees, and you could leave the grass underneath?

It doesn't have to be a big area to make a difference to the local butterfly and moth populations.

For more information about Fern 'n' Furl, email lanny@fernnfurl.com.

20 From The Village archive Years Ago

A SCENE at Barnt Green Sailing Club adorned the cover of our May 2005 magazine. Inside was a feature all about the club, which was holding an Open Afternoon that month.

IN THE NEWS: Road safety was still exercising readers' minds, with plenty of letters on the subject – David Barton had sent in a radical idea for traffic calming in Alvechurch, suggesting the closure of Swan Street/ Red Lion Street except for public transport.

Meanwhile, Lickey End campaigners were to hand a petition to Bromsgrove District Council and MP Julie Kirkbride calling for speed cameras on the Alcester Road and A38, and a 20mph limit outside the school.

PUPILS AT Tardebigge First School were learning how recycling can be fun during an Eco-Arts Week. As well as making outfits and collages from recycled materials, they spent a day working on outdoor projects (above) with Bob Green of the Bishops Wood Centre, a county facility for eco-education.

TUTNALL COUPLE Jan and Pat Denning told how they spend two months a year in rural Kenya with the Rotary Volunteer Dentistry scheme. They had organised an event in Rowney Green to raise funds for Kenyan children orphaned by AIDS.

10 From The Village archive Years Ago

A 1968 MORRIS 1000 with its bonnet popped at the 10th Pride of Longbridge event at Cofton Park made the cover of *The Village* in May 2015.

WHERE ARE ALL THE CANDIDATES? IT WAS election time in *The Village* area, yet we were bemoaning the lack of candidates leading to a number of two-horse races for places on Bromsgrove District Council.

If it hadn't been for UKIP (remember them?), the Conservative candidate would have been elected unopposed in the new Alvechurch South ward. Charlie Hotham stood as an independent in the new Barnt Green & Hopwood ward to make sure it wasn't a shoo-in for the Tory (and beat him), while in the Lickey Hills ward the Liberal Janet King made it a contest for Conservative Kit Taylor.

IN THE GENERAL ELECTION candidates for the Bromsgrove contituency (above), including the sitting MP Sajid Javid, put themselves in the firing line for a series of questions in a hustings organised by Alvechurch Baptist Church.

VILLAGE CARTOONIST Bob Lawton launched his novel, *The Man Who Stole Rock 'n' Roll,* drawing on his experiences in the Birmingham music scene in the 1960s as lead singer of The Swinging Chimes, sharing the bill with the likes of Gerry and the Pacemakers and even The Beatles.

THE FIRST winner of our "Find Vinny" competition came to our Alvechurch office to pick up her prize – back in those days it was a mug.

Liv Caden, of Redditch, had correctly identified where the little hedgehog was hiding in the previous issue.

EVENTS

THE ASKLEPIOS ORCHESTRA ask you to Save the Date of their Summer Concert, which will be on 29 June in the same venue.

WORCESTERSHIRE OPEN STUDIOS Art Week will run 16-25th August 2025.

THE MIDLAND SINFONIA will be in Feckenham Village Hall on the evening of Saturday 5th April for 'The Good Bad and The ?' music inspired by divine and evil. The programme will include Shostakovich's Sinfonia for Strings, Tavener's Song of the Angel, Elgar's Elegy, Bernard Hermann's Suite from Psycho and Charlie Daniel's The Devil went Down to Georgia.
They will be back in Alvechurch for a 'Family Concert' at 3pm on Saturday 10th May. A fun-filled afternoon of music for all the family including a story set to the music of Mother Goose Suite by Ravel. Information and tickets: www.midland-sinfonia.co.uk

MIDLAND CONCERT ORCHESTRA, a 40 piece ensemble will be performing at Roath Hall, Bromsgrove School on 22 June at 7pm. Tickets £15 (under 18s £5). They are offering unique arrangements of some of the best tunes from Broadway, from the libraries of Cole Porter, Gershwin, Irving Berlin, Rodgers and Hart and many more. Guest vocalist Cahrlie Green from Britain's Got Talent will perform alongside the orchestra. For information and tickets visit: midlandconcertorchestra.uk

BARNT GREEN WATERS will be hosting an open day at Upper Bittell on Saturday 17 May from 10:30am –3pm, to meet the sporting sections and activities, learn more and join them in taking part in one or more of the membership activities.

ST LAURENCE CHURCH, is hosting a concert for Oakville singers and Alvechurch Middle School Choir, Vox Anima, on Saturday 14 June at 7pm. Tickets are available from the Church Office, £5 per adult, £2 per child, There will be a bar and a raffle, all money raised will support the church's organ fund for essential works to the church organ.

MUSIC

ALVECHURCH COMMUNITY CHOIR usually meets in Alvechurch Village Hall on Mondays at 7.3pm with occasional pub and outdoor sessions and a live stream. The choir is inclusive and open to everyone, whether you think you can sing or not. New members are always welcome. For more information or to join or book them, see their website www.alvechurchcommunitychoir.org.uk. They meet in the Crown on 12 May and the Village hall on 19 May. They will be singing at St Richards Canal festival on 4 May and the Picnic in the Park on 25 May.

BEOLEY VILLAGE HALL hosts live music, comedy, cinema and jazz nights. On Wednesday Jazz nights the bar opens at 7.45pm, with entertainment from 8.15pm. For Friday night events, the bar opens at 7pm with entertainment from 7.30pm, on Saturdays the bar opens at 7.15pm with entertainment from 8pm. For details, contact Paul on 07973 759340 or Richard 01527 66646.

BEL CANTO SINGERS, the well-known 4-part Worcestershire choir, rehearse at St. John's Church, Redditch B98 7PZ on Monday evenings. They are always happy to welcome new singers. Just turn up at rehearsal on Mondays at 7.30pm where there will be a wide range of singing activities, refreshments and chat. More information contact Secretary Veronica Porter 07885 507899 or visit www.belcantosingers.org.uk

THE GEMINI Choir is seeking new singers. Info from Philip Morris on 07969 741137.

BLACKWELL Concert Band and Training Band is open to all brass and woodwind players of all abilities. To learn more about the band, book them, or find details of upcoming events, email-blackwellconcertband98@gmail.com or visit www.blackwellconcertband.co.uk

SINGING For Health is a group aimed specifically at people with health problems, mental or physical. They meet on Thursdays 2-3pm at St Chad's Church, Rubery (£3 per session). Everyone is welcome!

BROMSGROVE Music Centre runs FREE weekly string orchestra, concert band and beginner group Lift Off! sessions for young musicians. Run by Severn Arts at The Orchards School, Bromsgrove, on Mondays 5.45–6.45pm Individual instrumental lessons are also provided. See www.severnarts.org.uk/music-centre-groups

BROMSGROVE Folk Club meets on the second and last Thurs every month at Catshill Club 8pm. For a full list of events call Bob Bignell on 0121 476 5938 or see www.bromsgrovefolkclub.co.uk

BROMSGROVE Rock Choir offers everyone the chance to sing pop, rock and chart songs – no audition needed. Free taster sessions available. More info at www.rockchoir.com or on 01252 714276.

BROMSGROVE Community Choir meets on Thurs evenings, 6–7pm at Bromsgrove Methodist Church (main church hall). They sing for fun and enjoyment; everyone welcome, singers or not. Contact Ruth Henley for details on 07812 145267, or r.g.henley@btinternet.com

BARNT GREEN CHORAL SOCIETY meets in the Parish Centre behind St Andrew's Church, Sandhills Road, Barnt Green, on Mondays from 7.45 - 9.45pm. The choir sings a range of music throughout the year, performing at least three concerts. New singers are always welcome and there is no need to audition. For information, see barntgreenchoralsociety.org or facebook.com/barntgreenchoralsociety.

ARROW VALE SINGERS meet Wednesdays 8-10 at Batchley Community centre, Redditch. New members are always welcome. They sing in 4-part harmony but there's no need to read music or be an experienced singer. 4 weeks no obligation trial, They perform concerts every year and have fun with social events. Contact arrowvalesingershelen@gmail.com or find us on Facebook

IGNITED VOICES CHOIR at Blackwell Community Hall Thursdays 7.30 - 9pm. A unique singing experience blending powerful positive mindset techniques with uplifting harmonies to energise & empower you! Contact Alicia on 07876688497.

DANCING

JAZZ HEELS CLASS FOR ADULTS. A new class held on Tuesdays 6:45– 7.30pm at The Ark, Alvechurch. For more info contact Amy on 07979408997.

TANGO ARGENTINO at Barnt Green Quakers/ Friends Meeting House on Saturday mornings and Thursday evenings. For further information: www.facebook.com/groups/tango42/announcements.

AELFGYTHE Border Morris is seeking new dancers (female) and musicians (male or female) to join them for fun, exercise and dancing. They meet at

continues overleaf

WHAT'S ON GUIDE

VILLAGE HISTORY ON VIEW

THIS MONTH there will be an opportunity for villagers to view some of the albums of photographs and newspaper cuttings housed in the Alvechurch Historical Society Museum before it closed in 2020. Digitised photographs will also be shown and the pupil photographs from the school in School Lane will be on display.

It will also be an opportunity to look at the collection of Alvechurch-related items now permanently housed in a showcase in the library along with the 1851 census plan of the village.

The event will take place at Alvechurch Library on Friday 23 May 10-12. Tea and coffee will be available. Copies of the red book *Alvechurch 1920-1960* will be for sale at £5 each.

7.45pm every Weds in Alvechurch Baptist Church Hall. Everyone welcome. Come and play traditional folk music, or try Morris dancing. For more details call Pam on 07961 830 831.

FRENCH & Breton folk dancing meets at Alvechurch Village Hall on the first Sat each month from 2.30–5pm (Please check first by emailing alvechurchfrenchdance@gmail.com). Informal tuition and live music provided. New dancers (and musicians) welcome. £2 per session.

SEQUENCE Ballroom and Latin dancing every Mon evening at 8pm at the Longbridge Social Club, 1012 Bristol Road South, Northfield. Occasional free tuition. All welcome to a friendly fun-filled dance. Details from Kalvin on 07725 265024.

ALVECHURCH Morris Men are on the lookout for new dancers and musicians. They practise on Mondays at Alvechurch Baptist Church Hall, 8.30–10pm, followed by a "debrief" at a local hostelry. They dance in local towns and at various local and national events, and perform a world-famous (sort of) mummers play in the village every New Year's Day. No ability, fitness or co-ordination required – if you are male, 18+ and prepared to spend more time than is probably good for you in public houses, pop along to meet the group!
Drop in to any practice, contact Steve on 07375 592928 or email: alvechurchbagman@gmail.com

NANCY Butterfly Morris Dancers dance in the North-West Morris style (clogs!) and practise at Catshill Methodist Church Hall on Monday evenings ready to meet up with other Morris sides for social events and festivals. They are very happy to welcome new adult dancers and musicians. See: www.nancybutterfly.co.uk or Facebook for what they get up to. You can contact them via the website or Jane on 07726 915289.

AVONCROFT Folk Dance Group enjoys anything from barn dances to ones seen in *Pride & Prejudice* or *Poldark*. All welcome. The group meets every Thurs from 8–10pm at Avoncroft Arts Centre, B60 4JR. £2.50 incl refreshments. Info from Liz Stanton on 01905 353995 or liz@the-stantons.uk or visit www.avoncroftfdg.weebly.com

BJ's BUSY Boots Line Dancing Classes: Tues 2–3pm Bromsgrove Leisure Centre; 7–10pm Stoke Prior Sports/Country Club. Thurs 1.15–3.30pm Bromsgrove Methodist Church Centre. Social Dance usually 1st Sat in month at All Saints Church Hall, Burcot Lane. It's a fun way to exercise. For more details phone Brenda on 01527 870151.

AMY GREAVES SCHOOL OF DANCE & Fitness offers a variety of classes for toddler up to adults. Based in Hopwood, Bournville and Longbridge. Contact 07979408997
amygreaves1@hotmail.co.uk
www.amygreavesschoolofdance.com

SEQUENCE dancing every Tuesday evening at 8pm at Fairfield Village Hall. Welcoming and friendly atmosphere, all levels welcome. For details please contact Joyce & Len on 0121 682 3266.

DANCE AND FITNESS at Bournheath Village Hall including Adult Zumba, Pilates and Stretch classes as well as KS1 and Baby Ballet. For more information message 'Dance With Nikki' on social media or n.foulkes@hotmail.co.uk

LINEDANCE CLASS, Thursdays 6pm - 7pm at Extracare Longbridge Village. Contact Bryan 07975569065 for details.

BEGINNERS LINEDANCE class, Tuesdays 6pm - 7pm at West Heath Community Centre, Hamstead House, B31 3QY. Contact Bryan 07975569065.

NEW SALSA dance classes, every Thursday at the Alvechurch Inn, B48 7LD. Doors open at 6pm. Beginners classes at 7pm, with the main class at 8pm. All classes are £9 each or both classes for £15. Contact 07779686679.

DANCING POINTE offering RAD ballet classes age 3-18. Based at St Andrews first school, Barnt Green. Contact daningpointe@outlook.com.

CLUBS, GROUPS & SOCIETIES

ALVECHURCH DRAMATIC SOCIETY meets on Tuesday and Thursday evenings (during rehearsal periods) at 8pm at Alvechurch Village Hall. They generally put on two shows a year and aim to perform a wide variety of genres including comedies, thrillers, farce, classics and pantomime. They are a friendly group, and whether you want to tread the boards, get involved backstage or front of house, or work on the technical side of a production, you will be very welcome. More information can be found at www.dynami.org.uk/alvechurchdramaticsociety/ or email ads.alvechurch@gmail.com

ST GODWALD'S Community Cafe meets every other Fri from 10am–noon at St Godwald's Room adjacent to the Church Hall, Finstall Road, Bromsgrove. Friendship, cake, tea/coffee. Donations welcome— monies to St Basil's charity for homeless youngsters. More info: davidrowe876@btinternet.com

BROMSGROVE Men In Sheds is a group for anyone aged 50+ who wants to spend time with like-minded people. The group have relocated from Stoke Prior to a unit in Finstall (B60 3BP). Please contact Age UK BRWF on 01527 570490/ enquiries@ageukbrwf.org.uk for more information

PLACES OF WELCOME is a growing network of local community groups who provide neighbourhoods with places where all people can feel safe and connect, belong and contribute. The network is open in St Laurence Church and The Ark on Wednesdays 10.30am-12pm, all are open to everyone and offer friendship and hospitality, free refreshments and local knowledge about the neighbourhood. Visit www.placesofwelcome.org.uk or email info@placesofwelcome.org.uk

REDDITCH Military History Society usually meets monthly in St Luke's Church Hall (Evesham Road, Redditch, B97 4JX), 7 for 7.30pm. Info from Ron on 01527 545450 or ronnieg33b@hotmail.co.uk

FRIENDS Of Bittell Reservoirs is a group of local people interested in preserving the natural environment of the Site of Special Scientific Interest at Upper Bittell, Lower Bittell and Mill Shrub reservoirs, which are important staging posts for migrant birds and wildlife. If you have an interest in preserving this unique environment and would like to help in its preservation and maintenance, contact paul_and_carrol@live.co.uk

ALVECHURCH VILLAGE SOCIETY runs a regular programme of social events and guided walks, as well as maintaining local footpaths. Talks and social events are held in the Village Hall, unless otherwise noted. Entry at talks and AGM is free for members and £1 for guests, including a drink and biscuits. Litter picks start at 10am. Other social events are by ticket and details of venue, start time and price will be published by the organisers nearer the time. On Wed 14 May at 7.40pm Liam Blackwood will host an evening of yoga instruction and practice. On Sat 21 June at 7.30pm it will be the AVS end of season party with music by Soul Manifesto (tickets only, details to follow).

REDDITCH Community Shed is a project that encourages skills, combats loneliness, and provides a sense of worth in people who are retired or otherwise wondering what to do with themselves. They have a woodworking work shop in the Kingfisher Centre outside Primark and they are open Tuesday and Thursday mornings. Call in for tea and biscuits and a look round. More details at www.RedditchCommunityShed.co.uk or on FaceBook.

THE MONDAY Fellowship group meets at the Parish Centre behind St Andrew's Church in Barnt Green at 2.30pm on the second Monday every month; £3 to include tea and biscuits and an interesting talk. Info: Amanda Dauncey on 0121 445 5966.

INNER WHEEL Club of Redditch meet on 2nd Tuesday of the month at the Southcrest Hotel Redditch. An international Women's Organisation, they enjoy a bit of everything; walks, talks, days & evenings out, and everything in between whilst at the same time helping the community. Contact Anne Robertson for information 07580351361. Or email redditch.innerwheel@gmail.com or visit www.innerwheel.co.uk

BROMSGROVE & Redditch Welcomes Refugees is a group of volunteers providing a range of support - from friendship and practical help - for all refugees and asylum seekers moving into the district. BRWR is open to all, irrespective of political or religious beliefs, and new volunteers are always needed. More info at brwr.uk

RE-ENGAGE aims to help isolated elderly people by offering monthly tea parties where they can reconnect or make new friends in their own community. If you know of an elderly person who could benefit, please get in touch on 07539 276054. Guests need to be aged over 75 and living alone, and must be mobile enough to walk to a driver's car with assistance. Find info at www.contact-the-elderly.org.uk or on Facebook @ ContacttheElderlyRedditch

AGE UK Herefordshire and Worcestershire have a free Dementia Café at Finstall Village hall. It is a free social hub aimed at people with dementia, their families, and carers in Bromsgrove and the surrounding areas. It takes place every 2nd Wednesday of the month from 10.30am-12.30pm.

BROMSGROVE Photographic Society is a friendly, club for those keen to learn about, or improve, their photographic and digital imaging skills. The growing membership has skills ranging from novice to highly skilled, within wide-ranging subjects. The club meets on Tues nights, 8-10pm at Avoncroft Arts Centre. For more info, visit www.bromsgroveps.com or see Facebook.

ROTARY Club of Bromsgrove meets every 2nd Tues of the month at Maekong Thai Restaurant, and every 4th Tues at Bromsgrove School, both 7pm for 7.30pm. For more info www.bromsgroverotary.org.uk or contact Ron Pearce on 07703 567982.

LICKEY PHAB Club is a social club where people aged 14 and over, with and without disabilities, can come together each week to have fun! It is affiliated to national charity Phab. The club meets every Mon from 7.30–9.30pm at The Trinity Centre, Lickey Parish Hall to have fun, play games, do crafts or just chat – there's also a tuck shop! More info from Louise Boother on 07814 122990 or lickeyphabclub@hotmail.com

BEACON Ladies Club meets at 8pm on alternate Weds evenings at The Hawthorns Social Club, Rednal Hill Lane, Rednal. A varied programme of speakers and outings, including occasional visits to the theatre. New members of all ages welcome. £12 annual membership, plus £2 fortnightly. Call Barbara on 0121 445 3456 or Anita on 445 3770.

BARNT GREEN FRIENDSHIP CLUB meets every 2nd Tues of the month at 2.15pm at Burcot Grange. Visitors £4 to include tea and biscuits. Members 50p. Ladies and gents both welcome. For more details call Rosalind on 0121 445 0598.

THE WORCESTER-BIRMINGHAM & DROITWICH CANALS SOCIETY holds regular monthly meetings in the meeting room behind The Weighbridge Pub, Scarfield Hill, Alvechurch on the first Tuesday of the month at 7.45pm. There is usually a guest speaker. They promote the upkeep of the canals to ensure that the heritage is looked after for all to enjoy and are a registered charity. Find out more: www.wbdcs.org.uk or Facebook @wbdcs.org.uk. or email contact@wbdcs.org.uk. Non-members are welcome. Free entry.

ALVECHURCH WEDNESDAY CLUB next meet on 14th May when they have John Ullah coming to talk on the lives of Laurel and Hardy. He is quite an expert on his subject, so it should be a very interesting and fun afternoon. Visitors are £5 or join the Club for a yearly subscription of £30 and only pay £2 per month for a fun afternoon to include a raffle plus tea or coffee and biscuits. They meet at Alvechurch Cricket Club and start at 1.30pm. There is plenty of parking available. More information from Janet on 447 7870 or Lis on 445 3895.

COFFEE, Cake and Chat is a place to meet new friends or catch up with old ones (with a dedicated baby area) on the 4th Friday of each month 10:30am-12pm at The Wheel, Blackwell. No charge, donations welcome. More info 0121 445 1425.

LICKEY Hills Local History Society meets monthly at 7.30pm in the Trinity Centre, Old Birmingham Road, Lickey B45 8ES. Annual subscription £20. Non-members £4 per meeting. Please email: info@lhlhs.org.uk or visit: www.lhlhs.org.uk. Their next meeting will be "In Search of the Bromsgrove Guild in the West Midlands" by Quintin Watt on November 19th.

BROMSGROVE (1982) PROBUS Club provides opportunities for retired and semi retired men to meet socially. A members meeting is held at Avoncroft Arts Centre on the 3rd Wednesday monthly 10am until 12pm, including refreshments and a talk by a guest speaker. Other regular activities include monthly walks, lunches including partners, snooker--, social outings and IT. For more info visit www.bromsgrove1982probus.weebly.com or contact Martin on 07717 150136.

BROMSGROVE & Redditch Soroptimists meets every 2nd Thurs of the month. New members welcome – please email sibrsoroptimist@gmail.com or ring 07812 985927 for more details.

ALVECHURCH Historical Society has a planned programme of talks on the first Monday of the month at 7.45pm at The Ark, Alvechurch. More details from Anne Humphries on 0121 445 5955.

KINGFISHER PROBUS Club of Redditch invites retired and semi-retired men to join a friendly environment. They meet every 2nd Thurs of the month at 11.30am at the Court Leet,174 Worcester Road, Bromsgrove B61 7AY, with a short meeting at 12pm then lunch followed by a talk given by a visiting speaker. Partners/friends welcome to join for walks, trips, golf, skittles and special lunches. Contact Chris Bailey on 01527 835802 for info. More info at www.kingfisherprobusredditch.co.uk

BROMSGROVE ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY meets on the 3rd Monday of each month at Bromsgrove Rugby Club. Doors open 7.30pm, speakers begin 7.45pm. Admission free on your first visit; refreshments available. Observing meetings are also held on the first Monday each month – bring your telescopes. More info via www.broms-astro.org.uk, www.facebook.com/bromsastro or emailing info@broms-astro.org.uk

ROTARY CLUB of Lickey Hills meets on Monday evenings, 7.15 for 7.30pm, at Hillscourt Conference Centre (NASUWT headquarters) on Rose Hill (B45 8RS). For details contact Graham Wiseman on 0121 460 1402.

SILVER THREADS, the Alvechurch club, meets on the first Weds each month at 2pm in Alvechurch Village Hall. You'll be sure of a welcome in this friendly atmosphere, where members can chat over a cup of tea. There are regular bingo sessions, and occasional days out. New members welcome. More info from Pat on 0121 447 8630.

WOODRUSH RUGBY Club "Old Dogs" meet at 8pm on the 2nd Thurs in the month at the Clubhouse, Icknield Street, 01564 822878. Open to all former players, social members and old friends for a social chat and reminisce over a glass of beer. Join us: call Mike Betts on 07960 303254 or visit www.woodrushrfc.co.uk or info@woodrushrfc.co.uk

The North Worcestershire Association of the NATIONAL TRUST hold monthly meetings with interesting speakers on 3rd Thursday 7.30pm at Tardebigge Community Hall, also walks, outings and an annual holiday. For further info email Ros257@yahoo.co.uk

Bromsgrove & District AMATEUR RADIO CLUB meets every Friday evening from 7.30pm at Avoncroft Arts Centre. The club is open to anyone with an interest in Amateur Radio. More details from the secretary Alan on 07886 000052 or secretary@bromsgroveradioclub.co.uk

COMMUNITY COFFEE morning - open to all. Free refreshments and chat. Wednesdays 10-12 at Barnt Green Baptist Church. Enquiries can be made to: events@bgb.org.uk

THE MACULAR Society Barnt Green Support Group meets on the last Fri of the month (with some exceptions) at The Parish Centre, behind St Andrew's Church, Barnt Green, B45 8NR, 2–4pm. Friendly, self-help group, proving there is more to life than this devastating eye condition. New members always welcome. For more info, ring Wendy on 0121 445 1585 or Alan on 01527 877864.

REDDITCH CHESS CLUB meets at Alvechurch & Hopwood Cricket Club, Alvechurch B48 7TA, every Wednesday at 7.15pm September - May. The club has teams playing in both Birmingham and Worcester leagues. New players are welcome - just turn up or contact Giles Stanton on 07932 053621 or David Smith on 07540 304620.

FRIDAY BRIDGE CLUB play friendly, competitive, duplicate bridge every Friday at Burcot Village Hall. Visitors are always welcome. Tea, coffee and biscuits are provided during a short break. Please arrive by 6.35pm to enable play to start promptly at 6.45pm. For details contact Secretary Ed Payne 07950951122.

MONDAY BARNT GREEN BRIDGE CLUB are a friendly club who meet at the Quaker meeting house on Mondays at 6.30pm. Play bridge and meet new people. For details call Olivia Goodborn 07583 484065.

CATSHILL Carers and Bereavement Back Up Group specifically offers respite, socialising and occasional speakers to carers and bereaved in the area. It meets on the last Tues each month in the coffee bar area of Catshill Methodist Church Centre in Golden Cross Lane from 2.30pm for about 1.5hrs. All carers and bereaved welcome, as well as those who used to care for someone who has passed away or is now in a care facility. Tea and biscuits/ cake provided – no charge. Contact Di (0121 445 3595) for details and encouragement.

FRANCIS BURGESS FREEMASONS LODGE is open to men over the age of 18, for enjoyable evenings, meet new people and develop new friendships, whilst adhering to the freemasonry core values. The Lodge holds a number of social events and carries out charity work. Contact Mick Jennings 07568524130 or mickjennings@hotmail.co.uk

BROMSGROVE Speakers Club meets at The Bell at Belbroughton every other Tues, 7.45–10pm. Everyone who wants to gain confidence in public speaking is welcome, book in advance www.bromsgrovespeakers.org.uk.

REDDITCH Rotary Club meets Monday lunchtimes at the Abbey Hotel, Redditch, B98 9BE. You would be very welcome to join in. Want to be involved, hear interesting speakers, and serve your community? Contact Peter Williams on 01527 60277.

FAMILY BOARD GAMES CLUB at Alvechurch Library. Join in the fun and bring your friends to spend an afternoon playing family board games. They will have lots of tables with different games, free, suitable for all children. Children under 8 must be accompanied by an adult. No need to book, just turn up. Refreshments available for £1.

ADULT BOARD GAMES CLUB at Alvechurch Library. Join in the fun and meet new friends by spending a few hours playing your favourite board games in the library. They will have lots of games from Rummikub, Catan, Queendomino. They meet on the first Thursday of the month from 3pm until 5pm. No need to book, just turn up

CHESS CLUB AT ALVECHURCH LIBRARY. There is a weekly Chess Club rom 11am on Saturdays, for all ages and abilities, just let them know if you'd like to join on 01905 822722 and ask for Alvechurch Library.

SPORT, FITNESS & HEALTH

UPTON WARREN SAILING CLUB sails throughout the year at Aztec (Upton Warren) opposite Webb's Garden Centre, Wychbold. A small, friendly club with both mixed fleet racing and cruising sessions. Most members sail their own boats but there are also club boats available for members to use. See www.uwsc.co.uk to find out more or contact membership@uwsc.co.uk

JOOLISM HIIT CLASSES. Semi-PT resistance training for ladies only in a well-equipped gym in Bromsgrove. For ladies who want toned and strong bodies. Attendance must be pre-booked via julie@joolismfitness.co.uk

WOODRUSH RUGBY FOOTBALL CLUB, Icknield Street, Alvechurch, B38 0EL is recruiting: Senior (Men & Ladies) U17 Colts Mini/Junior & Micros. Call 07341 256821 for recruitment or 01564 822878 (Clubhouse) email info@woodushrfc.co.uk or see: www.drushrfc.co.uk Facebook @WoodrushRFC

ALVECHURCH VILLAGE SOCIETY'S WALKS are held at 2pm of the first Sunday of the month unless noted otherwise. For walks outside the village, please contact the walk leader if you need a lift. Occasionally, weather conditions mean that a walk must be cancelled at late notice: check with the leaders or the AVS website if unsure. Always wear appropriate footwear. Contact walks organiser Tony Brannon for more information about the walks: avswalks@gmail.com. The next walk will be on Sun 11 May at 2pm "A Local Wildlife Walk" led by Mary Green. Meet at The Crown, Withybed, call 0121 445 5957 for details. The following walk will be on Sunday 1 June at 2pm led by Rosemary and Steve Dewar for "A Walk from the Peacock", meet at the Peacock Inn, Icknield Street, B38 0EH. Call 07743 127885 for details.

BARNT GREEN FISHING CLUB controls the fishing (both game and coarse) on the Bittell Reservoirs. Contact: barntgreenfishingclub@gmail.com or Facebook @Barnt Green Fishing Club.

REDDITCH & Bromsgrove Company of Archers meet April–Sept, Mon 6.30pm and Fri 6.30pm at Meadow Park Football Ground (by Harris Brush Works – outdoors) and Oct–March on Fri 6.30pm at Studley Leisure Centre (indoors). New members welcome (juniors from 8 years old, seniors from 18 to 80+, seasoned archers or absolute beginners). Beginners' courses run throughout the year or taster sessions by appointment. Further info from rbcoaCoach@gmail.com, rbcoasecretary@gmail.com, or www.redditcharchers.org

REDDITCH Ramblers is a sociable group offering a full walks programme including walks every Sat and Sun and a midweek walk most weeks. Sun walk is usually 6–9 miles; the Sat walk is more challenging, usually 10–12 miles. Midweek walks

continues overleaf

vary, sometimes morning walks followed by option of lunch or full day walking. The Saturday Strollers walk fortnightly (4–5 miles). Newcomers are welcome and can walk three times with the group before deciding if they want to join. Holidays, coach trips and social events arranged throughout the year. Info at redditch.ramblers@gmail.com or www.redditchramblers.org.uk

PHYSIOTHERAPY-LED Pilates Classes in Cofton Hackett, Barnt Green and Lickey Hills. Mixed ability Daytime and Evening classes available. Mother & Baby classes also run by Women's Health Physiotherapists. Small and welcoming classes aimed to improve balance, muscle tone and posture as well as overall body strength. Contact Elizabeth on 07850 604425 or elizabethalexanderltd@gmail.com or see www.elizabethalexanderphysiotherapy.com

CLUBBERCISE@ Alvechurch: Get sweat and glow! Get ready for exercise in disguise. You'll be dancing yourself happy and sweating until you sparkle, without even realising it. Mondays 7.30–8.30pm at Alvechurch School. All places MUST be pre-booked via www.leeshfitness.co.uk or 07541 625939.

POUND FITNESS@ Alvechurch: Channel your inner rockstar with this full body cardio-jam session. Using Ripstix®, lightly-weighted drumsticks engineered specifically for exercising, POUND transforms drumming into an incredibly effective way of working out. Weds 7.30–8.15pm at Alvechurch School. All places MUST be pre-booked via www.leeshfitness.co.uk or 07541 625939.

BARNT GREEN Sailing Club offers regular sailing, either racing or casual sailing, in beautiful surroundings at Upper Bittell reservoir. For info contact secretary@bgsc.uk or see www.sailing-barntgreen.com

BRIAR Rose Field Archers is a field archery club based near Bromsgrove. There are two qualified coaches for those interested in taking up the sport. Contact briarrosefieldarchers@gmail.com

YOGA Really Works: classes on Thurs evenings (term-time only), 7–8pm at Cotteridge Quaker Meeting House, Watford Road. Six-week blocks £45. Slow and mindful rhythmic movement in time with the breath. Accessible venue—classes open to wheelchair uses and less abled persons. Contact George on 07490 781637 or yogareallyworks@outlook.com, see www.yogareallyworks.co.uk or on Facebook @Yogareallyworks

THE RAMBLERS Bromsgrove Group: Guided walking for pleasure, fitness and fun. Full programme of walks / events throughout the year. More info at www.bromsgroveramblers.webs.com or call Martin on 01527 857117 or Peter on 01527 558203.

ALVECHURCH WALKING Buddies: join a regular local walk with like-minded people who simply want to go on a local, sedate and friendly walk with no pressure. Well-behaved owners and their dogs are very welcome. The group meets at 10.30am every Thurs. For more info, search for 'alvwb' on Facebook or contact Tony on 07763 468893.

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL run weekly health walks around Bromsgrove. The walks are usually steady in pace and led by qualified walk leaders, and free to attend. Blackwell Gentle Walk, Wednesdays, 10.30am, start opposite the entrance to St. Catherine's Church. Lickey End Walking for Health, Tuesdays, 10am, meet at Lickey End Recreation Ground car park. Oakalls and Harwood Park Health Walk, Wednesdays, 2pm outside Banners in Aston Fields. Sanders Park Walk, Mondays, 9.50am for 10am start, meet at the café kiosk near the car park. There are three options: Short (30mins), Medium (2-3miles in 60-75mins), and Fast (3+ miles in 60mins). Bromsgrove Rural Walk, Fridays, 9.45am for 10am departure, meet in the Sanders Park car park extension. Walks vary between 4 and 7 miles and can involve driving.

YOGA CLASSES working with your body rather than against it. Classes are for EveryBody and take place at Blackwell First School (Tues 6.30pm), at The Ark in Alvechurch (Wed 1pm & 7pm) and online. Sally has over 20 years of teaching experience, helping you to move better and feel great. To trial a class contact Sally: www.MyYogaMind.co.uk, classes@MyYogaMind.co.uk, 07903 663085, F: Sally My Yoga Mind.

SARACEN Cycling Club is seeking new members. Men, ladies, beginners, and regular riders are all welcome. The long-established club meets regularly by the Tardebigge Pub on Thurs at 10am and Sun at 9.45am. See www.saracenroadclub.com or call Ivor on 0121 453 2287.

LONGBRIDGE Cycling Club meets weekly on Tues and either Sat or Sun. Ride pace generally at 9-11mph overall average, varied distances. Hotel and hostel weekends away, cycle camping adventures, social outings and much more. All ages, beginners, and seasoned cyclists all welcome. Call or text Deb on 07738 982161, email debweston@aol.com or see www.longbridgecyclingclub.com or Facebook @longbridgecyclingclub

MERCIAN NORDIC WALKING: come and try a taster session for fun, fitness and friendship. More info at www.merciannordicwalking.co.uk Online fitness and personal training available at www.mercianfitness.co.uk

PILATES PILATES with Steff Affleck (Rowney Green) Mat classes, apparatus (reformer/ tower / barrels etc.) 1:1 and duets. Irrespective of age, gender, health or fitness we could all benefit from understanding more about how to keep moving well.
Joseph Pilates' system of exercise, using apparatus he invented, enables you to challenge what is strong, build what is weaker, exploring how you can balance the body to move away from pain and discomfort towards greater resilience and independence. Graduate of Pilates Professional Advanced Teacher Training; teaching Pilates for 17 years. Call 07759590830 or see www.steffaffleck.co.uk

BARNT Green Sports Club (Margesson Drive, Barnt Green, B45 8LR) offers racquet sports in a friendly environment, plus running and cycling groups. Clubhouse with licensed bar. More info from Nick Butcher on 0121 445 1978 or visit www.barntgreensportsclub.co.uk

CATSHILL FC offers youth coaching sessions each Saturday morning at Catshill Middle School, Meadow Road, Catshill, B61 0JW. Boys and girls from Reception age upwards are welcome. Contact Gary on 07462 118920 or see www.catshillfc.co.uk.

BROMSGROVE & REDDITCH Badminton Club welcomes players for social and league play. Playing Sunday evenings 5.40 to 7.40pm. Details from Steve Whittaker 07805 051456.

PILATES with Lottie Newberry: Physiotherapy-led Pilates classes every Monday in Alvechurch in the day and Barnt Green in the evening. Contact Lottie on lottienewberrypilates@hotmail.com. All abilities welcome.

ACTIVE SENIORS Exercise Classes at Alvechurch Village Hall, run by Bromsgrove council on Fridays starting 9.15am, £5 per class. Contact g.peart@hotmail.co.uk or call on 07828 515344 for info.

TAI CHI (Qigong) sessions in Alvechurch Village Hall on Mon 10–11am and Friday 10.30. Qigong is an integration of physical postures, breathing techniques, and focused intentions. More details Robert Hawkesford (Bob) on 07788856642 or email rhawkesford59@gmail.com

FIVE WAYS Old Edwardians' Cricket Club at Ash Lane, Hopwood: Junior, Men's and Women's teams, come and join in! Excellent facilities. Everyone welcome. Coaching for juniors on Fri evenings May to Aug. Contact Mark Tovey on 01527 835031.

MEDITATION CLASSES for a calmer stress-free life. Classes are 35 minutes long at The Ark, Alvechurch at 2.25pm and online. Sally is an experienced teacher, has an MSc in Mindfulness Studies and can help you to REDUCE STRESS, FEEL CALMER & SLEEP BETTER. For a trial, contact Sally: www.MyYogaMind.co.uk, classes@MyYogaMind.co.uk, 07903 663085, F: Sally My Yoga Mind.

NEW Ravens (North East Worcestershire Ravens Rugby League Club) based at Forshaw Heath Lane, Portway, B94 5LH. Junior training and 'little leaguers' take place on Sun mornings from 10.30am, with open-age and touch on Weds evenings from 7pm. All welcome at this family-orientated club. Contact Gail on 07515 020844 or Jason on 07957 248464 visit www.newravens.net

KINGS Norton Rhinos offers contact and non-contact rugby for children from Reception to Year 12. A safe and friendly introduction to rugby – and plenty of outdoor fun and exercise! Training takes place at KNRFC Ash Lane, Hopwood, on Sundays from 9.30–11.30am. Contact Simon Thompson on 07968 424585 or visit www.knrfc.co.uk

HOPWOOD Ladies Cycling Club meets at Hopwood Playing Field on Tuesdays at 11.30am and Wednesdays at 9.30am. For information visit Cycling UK or email Sheila Evans on fairf8@yahoo.co.uk

MARTIAL ARTS Kickboxing/Karate at The Ark Tuesdays 6.30-7.30. For more information please visit www.forcecombatmartialarts.co.uk

SLIMMING WORLD at Cofton Village Hall, on Wednesdays 9:30am, 5:30pm and 7:30pm.

ASSERTIVENESS AND HELPING SKILLS DONINGTON TRAINING at Alvechurch Village Hall. Easy, enjoyable and effective learning. Wednesdays, pay what you think and can afford, any profits go to The Village Hall. http://tinyurl.com/DTcdates or John Talbut (0121) 445 4607.

LIFE-CHANGING MEDITATION & MINDFULNESS SESSIONS Transform stress into inner peace with weekly sessions at The Friends Meeting House in Barnt Green and The Meadow Farm, Redditch. Discover powerful techniques to relax, sleep better, and thrive in a nurturing, supportive community. Contact Coz at 07770 067349 to book your free trial. Follow for tips on Facebook/Instagram: @MeditationWithCoz Visit MeditationWithCoz.com

BARNT GREEN CHUGGERS & CHAINGANG provide run & cycling sessions for mixed abilities, those wanting to stay in shape plus those wishing to improve their running, cycling & fitness all in a social & recreational environment. Club Sessions - Chuggers (run) Monday & Wednesday 7pm and Chaingang (cycling) Wednesday 7pm & Saturday 9am all from Barnt Green Sports Club. For more info or to arrange a trial session please contact kategallimore@googlemail.com

GENTLE EXERCISE CLASSES working on mobility, strength, flexibility and balance. Classes are very welcoming and inclusive and are held on: Wednesday's 1.30-2.30 at St Stephens Church Hall, Rednal and Thursdays 10am-11am Blackwell Community Hall, Blackwell. The cost is £5 per class. For information call Lorraine 07866877881

LEGS, BUMS AND TUMS every Thursday morning at The Parish Centre at 9.15am at £6 per class. All abilities welcome. Contact Natasha on 07828890774 or natasha.atkinson5@sky.com for more information.

KEEP FIT by Exercising to Music! Every Monday morning at 10am and Thursday morning at 10.15am at The Friends Meeting House. £6 per class pay as you go. All abilities welcome. Contact Natasha on 07828890774 or natasha.atkinson5@sky.com for more information.

Since the loss of many pay-and-play badminton opportunities in the Bromsgrove area after Covid, MANOR BADMINTON CLUB have re-introduced the facility! Come on down for £5 sessions with coaching included!

COFTON MOVE MORE – Age UK BRWF Exercise Class for the over 50s. Mondays, 1.45-2.45pm at Cofton Village Hall. No need to Book. Contact Age UK BRWF on 01527 570490/ enquiries@ageukbrwf.org.uk for more information

SINGLE BOOTS are a friendly walking club for single people. They organise weekend day walks; summer evening walks; weekend trips away in cottages, B&B's and camping; and social activities. Visit: www.singleboots.co.uk

RACHEL MELLER YOGA: Relaxed, friendly and inclusive yoga classes, beginners most welcome- Beckett's Farm: Tues 2-3pm, Sat 9.30-10.30am Blackwell: Thurs 6-7pm Burcot: Fri 1-2pm. FREE YOUR BODY, SOOTHE YOUR NERVOUS SYSTEM, STILL YOUR MIND. Contact: 07799 148249, meller-rachel@gmail.com, FB @rachelmelleryoga

HELPING HANDS FOR HOPWOOD

HOPWOOD VILLAGE HALL committee invites anyone with an interest in the hall to join in at their AGM on Wednesday 28 May at 7.30pm.

"Everyone's welcome: come and meet, speak and have a cuppa with us, get an idea what we do and what new projects we are undertaking," said a spokesman.

"Have you got what it takes to be part of the running the hall, whether having an active role or just would like to add your opinions? we need fresh members and fresh ideas? Do pop along, we are a friendly bunch!" For more info, call 0770 6383 099 or 0121 445 4022

GARDENS & FLOWERS

BLACKWELL COMMUNITY GARDEN at St Catherine, Blackwell. Pop along to help water, plant and harvest. Info on 0121 445 1425.

ROWNEY GREEN HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY meet at the Village Hall on the second Thursday of each month at 7.15pm. On Thursday 8th May they welcome as our Speaker, Robin Pearce and his subject is "Dahlia for Garden Display". . . Robin ran a wholesale and retail nursery for over 20 years but is now retired and enjoying his own garden. He continues to grow a wide range of hardy plants, with a special interest in Dahlias, hosta, pulmonaria, galanthus and woodland plants. Guests are welcome £3.50 including coffee and biscuits. For more information please do not hesitate to contact Lindsay Smith on 01527 592874.

DODFORD GARDENING CLUB meets on the 2nd Monday each month (except August) usually in Dodford Village Hall at 7.45pm. New members and visitors welcome. More info at www.dodfordgardeningclub.co.uk or call Penny on 07706 153618.

BROMSGROVE FLOWER CLUB holds regular monthly meetings on the 3rd Thursday of each month. Meets at 2pm, at All Saints Church Hall, Burcot Lane, Bromsgrove B601AF. A yearly membership is available or come as a visitor. Refreshments & then a demonstration of flower arrangements and a raffle. Further information on 07843758489.

GREEN SHOOTS AND TIPS GARDENING CLUB at Alvechurch Library meet on the fourth Friday of the month from 11-12pm, come and join green fingered friends for a chat and share your knowledge. They have lots of horticultural books to borrow too.

ART, CRAFT & LITERATURE

THE WITHYBED POETS are local people who write poetry and share and discuss it with each other. You don't have to live in Withybed Green, though most of our meetings are there. They meet regularly every six weeks or so.
They like to read to local audiences and some of them write "poetry on request." For details of next meeting and more information contact marygreen5005@gmail.com.

THE "CRAFTY LADIES" craft group meets every Monday morning in Alvechurch Library from 10am–1pm, with knitting, crocheting, sewing, quilting etc. More info on 01905 822722.

BURCOT WOODTURNING CLUB offers a friendly meeting place for woodturners of all abilities and experience. A varied programme includes demos, talks, hands-on practical evenings and visits to exhibitions. The group meets on the first Thurs each month, 7.15–9.30pm at Burcot Village Hall. Visit www.burcotwoodturners.org.uk

ALVECHURCH LIBRARY is available to host day and short courses such as card-making or scrapbooking. If you have a skill to teach or share and would like to rent a space, call the Hub on 01905 822722 and ask for Alvechurch Library.

ALVECHURCH ART GROUP meets at the Baptist Hall (rear of church) every Tues from 1–3.30pm, using all mediums except oil. All welcome, especially beginners. Friendly tuition. Call Paul on 0121 445 5437 or drop in.

ALVECHURCH LIBRARY Readers Group meets in the library on the first Thursday of the month from 2pm–3pm. New members welcome. Don't forget that you can access online audio and e-books 24/7, free of charge, by downloading the Borrowbox app. Visit www.worcestershire.gov.uk/libraries

LICKEY HILLS ART SOCIETY, a friendly bunch of artists and those interested in art, meet at Longbridge Methodist Church, Bristol Road, B45 9TY, on the first Sat each month at 7.30pm. Open to artists and non-artists alike. For more info email Lyn lyndasharp2010@yahoo.com or come along – the members would love to see you.

SEW TOGETHER meets on Tuesday mornings from 9.15am to 12.15pm and Tuesday afternoons from 12.30pm to 3pm during term time at the new Cofton Village Hall. They meet weekly to sew and socialise. All abilities are welcome and there are a variety of sewing machines to borrow if required. Contact Avril on sewtogether64@gmail.com or see Sew Together Cofton Hackett on Facebook.

BARNT GREEN ART CLUB meets at Barnt Green Scout and Guide Headquarters in Blackwell Road just beyond the Barnt Green Social Club. They run Tuesday morning and afternoon sessions with visiting tutors at 2 - 3 week intervals. Interested artists of all abilities are welcome. Please phone Jackie on 0121 445 4745 for details.

MARLBROOK QUILTERS meet on the 1st Wednesday of the month at Avoncroft Arts Centre, Redditch Road, Stoke Heath, Bromsgrove B60 4JR. They are a small friendly group who would like to welcome new members. For more information contact Maggie Forknell 07973 313034 or Sheila Nunnerley 0121 445 2238.

THE SEASONS ART CLASS is a course where you can discover your inner artist. Perfect for absolute beginners to improvers. Classes held at Rowney Green Village Hall, Bournheath Village Hall & Ullenhall Village Hall. Find out more by emailing seasonsartredditch@outlook.com.

ART & SOUL CREATIVE - Weekly Art, Craft and Design Clubs in Alvechurch - painting, drawing, textiles, pottery, sculpture, craft etc.- weekly kids Art clubs - Mon (Y10-13), Wed (Y4-6) & Thurs (Y7-9) 6.45 - 8.15pm term times. Adult Tuition, GCSE/A Level Art Tuition. For info email artandsoulcreative.org@gmail.com or call 0121 445 0655

FORGE MILL CREATIVE TEXTILE GROUP are a friendly group of local stitchers, experienced & beginners. Meet on Friday mornings at Beoley Village Hall. A leisure learning and development group exploring techniques and media to create textiles artwork. Contact Lynda on 0121 445 3212 or Janet on 0121 445 4335 for information.

KINGS NORTON PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY meet at The Tennis Club, Grange Hill Road, Birmingham B38 8RE. For information contact Dave Wall Tel: 0121 458 2562, email: dave.walluk@virgin.net

PAINTING & DRAWING If you enjoy painting and drawing, try this friendly community group meeting in the Rubery Leisure Centre, Holywell Lane, on Monday mornings, 9am-1pm, for all ages and abilities. The facilities are excellent for both indoor and outdoor working depending on personal preference and weather conditions. Tea and coffee is provided. For information: 0121 453 7716 (Fridays)

AVONCROFT ARTS SOCIETY at Avoncroft Arts Centre (Redditch Road, Bromsgrove B60 4JR), runs tutored/ non-tutored classes in Art, Textiles, Ceramics, Embroidery and Dance. Contact AAS on 01527 833829 or avoncroftarts@btconnect.com

AVONCROFT ARTS SOCIETY, Bromsgrove Various painting/drawing courses available from Mon-Friday. Including a History of Art class. Contact admin@avoncroftarts.org.uk or phone 01527 833829 for more information.

CHILDREN & FAMILIES

BABY Bounce & Rhyme is at Alvechurch Library Mondays 10–10.30am. Sing-a-long to traditional nursery rhymes and action songs.

STORYTIME at Alvechurch Library is on Tuesdays

11–11.30. Silly stories and tall tales for pre-school children to enjoy with parents and carers.

CURIOUS CUBS: An outdoor playgroup promoting nature and learning through play. Sessions run on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays for walkers to five years. Visit www.curiouscubs.co.uk for more infomation and to book your place.

DRAMA TOTS: Award-winning imaginary play classes for children 18 months to 5 years. Classes run term-time on Monday mornings in Alvechurch/Fridays in Barnt Green (other days/venues available). Contact Jo 07738 969460 for details.

TINY CHURCH (stay and play for under-5s and carers) meets in Holy Trinity Church, Lickey, each Weds from 11.15am–12.30pm during term times. Games, toys, snacks and stories, and a time to meet together with God. Just pop along, or contact 0121 445 1425 clive.rushton@btinternet.com

THE NATIONAL CHILDBIRTH TRUST (NCT) runs popular antenatal and postnatal courses to grow your knowledge and network, feel prepared and confident moving into the next chapter of your life. Discover and learn with other local parents-to-be, make life-long friends in your community. Held at St Andrew's Church, Barnt Green. www.nct.org.uk/courses-workshops or call 0300 330 0700.

SOLIHULL BABY MASSAGE is at Rowney Green Village Hall on Tuesdays. A relaxed environment for parents and babies to bond through massage. Visit www.solihullbabymassage.co.uk

NEW ROAD PARENTS SUPPORT for parents of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans children meets monthly in Bromsgrove. A confidential, voluntary, small support group for parents by parents. Close links with FFLAG. Visit www.newroadparents.org, email newroadparents@gmail.com or Facebook @New Road Parents Lgbtqi+ Support Group.

THEATRETRAIN Bromsgrove, performing arts for children 4-18yrs. Saturdays 10.30am-1.30pm. For a half-price trial email bromsgrove@theatretrain.co.uk or call 07766 724834.

TUTORING both online and in-person for Maths KS1 and KS2. English KS1 through to GCSE. For more information message 'Tutoring with Penny' on Facebook or email penny_foulkes@hotmail.co.uk

PRE-SCHOOL BALLET - Pre-school (2 ½ - 4 yrs) ballet held at Barnt Green Baptist Church on Monday mornings from 10am. Contact dancing-pointe@outlook.com for further details.

BLACKWELL STAY & PLAY on Mondays during term time at Blackwell Community Hall. Under 5s and their carers are welcome from 9.30am – 11am

LITTLE KITCHEN CLUB a toddler and preschool age cooking and play classes running on Wednesdays and Fridays in Redditch. Visit www.littlekitchenclub.co.uk for more details.

CHATTERBOOKS JUNIOR READERS GROUP is for children aged 7-12 years at Alvechurch Library. They do lots of fun activities around books and reading and there's lots of new books to borrow too. Please contact the library if you wish to join on 01905 822722 and ask for Alvechurch Library.

TINYTALK BROMSGROVE & REDDITCH: Baby and Toddler sign classes (using BSL signs to aid early communication) on Tuesdays, 10.30am at Blackwell Community Hall. Classes consists of signs and songs, followed by refreshments and playtime. Email sarahph@tinytalk.co.uk for info. Or visit www.tinytalk.co.uk/sarahph (to see all classes).

WOMEN'S INSTITUTES

FINSTALL CROSS WI meets at Finstall Village Hall on the second Tuesday of the month at 7.30pm. For more info see www.finstallcrosswi.org or email finstallcrosswi@gmail.com

BEOLEY WI meets on the first Tuesday of each month in Beoley Village Hall at 7pm. More info from Joan Lovett on 01527 584047 or email beoleysec@wfedwi.org.uk

BENTLEY PAUNCEFOOT WI meets at 7pm on the second Tuesday every month between April and November, and at 12pm December to March, at Bentley Village Hall (B97 5TB). More information from Helen Spence (01527 822622)or email bentleypauncefootsec@wfedwi.org.uk

BARNT GREEN WI meets at the Baptist Church at 7.30pm on the 3rd Thursday of the month. For information: Sheila Nunnerley 07465 439646.

ALVECHURCH WI meets on the second Monday each month in Alvechurch Village Hall, at 7.30pm. For more information email Lin Neal lin.neal@hotmail.com or alvechurchpres@wfedwi.org.uk

LICKEY WI usually meets on the first Tues every month at 7.30pm in the Parish Hall (Trinity Centre), Old Birmingham Road, Lickey. More info from Jenny Ryder on 0121 445 1872, Lickeywi@gmail.com or www.lickeywi.wordpress.com

HILLSIDE AT ALVECHURCH WI meets at 7.45pm on the first Weds each month at The Ark, Alvechurch. For more information contact Marian Clemons on 07586354826 or follow them on Facebook: Hillside WI at Alvechurch

BLACKWELL & BURCOT WI meets at Burcot Village Hall on the second Weds each month, at 2pm. For info call President Mrs Barbara Knight on 0121 445 3456.

HOPWOOD WI meets at Hopwood Village Hall on the first Thurs of the month at 7.30pm. For more information call Ann Thurrell on 0121 447 7668.

ST CATHERINE'S BLACKWELL WI meets on the 3rd Wednesday each month at 7.30pm at Burcot Village Hall. Contact Sue Barrett for more information on 01527 596092 or susanbarratt222@gmail.com

RUBERY WI meets on the 2nd Weds of the month at 7.30pm at Beacon Church Centre, when there are speakers, activities and competitions. The 4th Weds of each month is the craft evening. Non-members are welcome. Contact Judie1055@yahoo.co.uk 07810765314.

FAIRFIELD WI meet at Fairfield village hall on the second Wednesday of the month at 7pm. For further details contact Carol Hine at fairfieldwi1932@gmail.com

VILLAGE VENUES FOR HIRE

HOPWOOD VILLAGE HALL is available for hire for parties, groups and gatherings. Please contact Booking Secretary Ann Thurrell on 0121 447 7668 or visit www.hopwoodvillagehall.co.uk

TARDEBIGGE COMMUNITY HALL for hire: large, bright facility for functions, clubs, societies and all activities. To book call 07763 446902 or email tchbookings@gmail.com

THE WHEEL COMMUNITY ROOM IN BLACKWELL has daytime, evening and weekend availability for one-off and regular hire. Call 0121 445 1425.

THE TRINITY CENTRE IN LICKEY has evening and weekend availability for one-off and regular hire – more info on 0121 445 1425.

BARNT GREEN PARISH CENTRE has large and medium sized lounges available for regular hire for some morning and early afternoon sessions each week. Please contact the Parish Administrator on 0121 447 7097.

THE ARK AT ST LAURENCE has a large hall and kitchen, and smaller upper room for hire, for one-off and regular hires. More information and bookings please call 0121 447 7955 or email admin@thearkalvechurch.co.uk

ALVECHURCH VILLAGE HALL is available for hire to groups, clubs, societies, and private parties. The hall has a stage, PA system, kitchen and bar area. There is also a smaller conference room available for hire. Enquiries to the Hall Manager Andrea Ottley on 07455892909 or hallmanager.avh@gmail.com

ALVECHURCH CRICKET CLUB PAVILION is available for hire: weekdays for community groups/clubs/societies, evening functions/private parties. Licensed bar, dance floor, kitchen area and great outdoor space. Enquiries to Stuart Brereton via 07775 714165 or ahcc.bar@gmail.com

FAIRFIELD VILLAGE HALL is available to hire for functions, groups and parties. It has a large hall with kitchen facilities. Contact the booking secretary Andrew on 07762749943 or bookings@fvh.org.uk. See website for details www.fvh.org.uk

ROWNEY GREEN VILLAGE HALL has a large hall, with stage and sprung floor (ideal for dance and exercise) and two smaller rooms. Available for one off or regular hire, ample parking. Email: admin@rowneygreenvillagehall.org

BLACKWELL COMMUNITY HALL is available for groups, functions and parties. The large hall is complemented by a new kitchen and a grassed area. Details at blackwellcommunityhall.co.uk.

BEOLEY VILLAGE HALL has a wide range of facilities, including a modern kitchen, bar, PA system, projector and screen, skittles alley and a large car park with disabled access to the hall. To book your event, meeting, party or celebration for up to 100 people, please contact Richard on 01527 66646.

THE BOATHOUSE VENUE is set in the unique location of Upper Bittell and is available to hire for Weddings, Private Parties, Wakes, Meetings, Workshops and Group Gatherings. It offers a fully equipped kitchen and licensed bar. For enquiries, email boathouse.bgw@gmail.com.

COFTON VILLAGE HALL in Cofton Hackett is available for event hire, with a large hall and smaller meeting rooms. It also hosts a variety of activities and classes to explore. Visit coftonvillagehall.org for more info.

OUR LADY'S PARISH CENTRE in Rednal is available for hire for clubs, groups, private parties etc Large hall with kitchen and car park. Enquiries to olhallbooking@gmail.com or 0121 453 3452.

FEATURE IN WHAT'S ON

If you would like to feature in the What's On section, the deadline for the June issue is 14 May 2025. Email: info@villageonline.co.uk

ROLL UP FOR THE PICNIC

IT'S nearly time for Alvechurch's annual Picnic in the Park on Sunday 25 May in The Meadows, Alvechurch. Bring a picnic, but there will also be plenty of food options, bring a gazebo, your chairs, your dogs, your children, your grandparents – there is something for everyone!

The annual Alvechurch Fun Dog Show will start at 10.30am, with classes such as Best Trick, Waggiest Tail and Cutest Puppy. Local canine vet Sarah-Jane Barton is back to judge and most classes will not only have a rosette to third place but a prize for each class winner. All class winners go through to "Best in Show". Registration is on the day at 10am and closes at 10.25am. You can also register online before the day – the link will be on the website soon.

Every year the organisers strive to keep the much-loved format of stalls, entertainers, charities, and activities but they are always delighted to add more stalls and entertainment, and this year is no exception with many new stalls.

Weather permitting, the picnic will

be welcoming back pony rides and there may even be a fun balloon activity in the style of Crystal Maze, and lots more to see and do! The day will see some firm favourites including refreshments from The Lounge and others, bouncy castle, face painting, sporting challenges, activities, raffles, tombolas and lots of things to buy.

The full entertainment programme runs until 4.30pm when everyone heads over to the Alvechurch Cricket Club for more evening fun.

The official opening at noon will involve a local veteran and young logo designer Claire George – her drawing captured the intent of the organisers to commemorate 80 years since VE Day (see this year's winning logo, left).

This year's logo design competition had a record number of entries, and it was hard for the organisers just to pick one winner!

Event organiser Sarah Courbet said: "The event could not be held without the generosity of our sponsor stalwarts: Thomas Brothers and LogCo.co; along with JT Electrical once more. We also welcome new sponsors Acorn Dental. Massive thanks also go to Alvechurch Parish Council for allowing us to use 'The Meadows' and for all their ongoing support."

As ever, stewards are needed to help out on the day so if you could donate just one hour of your time on the day please email alvechurchpitp@gmail.com – you will get free refreshments including a bap and a pint!

As the picnic is held outside, things are subject to change - you can see the latest on their website www.alvechurchpicnic.org, or their Facebook page (search for Alvechurch Parish Picnic in the Park).

Safety, but no cigars for Church fans

ALvechurch FC cruised to safety with two matches remaining as they despatched already relegated Hitchin Town 4-1 at home.

This was only the second time all season The Church had scored four goals in a match and was as many as they had scored in the previous eight games put together.

The victory took Alvechurch to 53 points and arithmetical safety – and the sure chance to battle again next season in the Southern League Premier Central.

As it turned out, the two remaining games turned into three because an away fixture at Stratford Town had to be abandoned while the home team were 3-0 ahead after three people were hospitalised.

First, 17-year-old Alvechurch defender Issac Godwin suffered a broken leg in a tackle and was stretchered off in the first half, then a Stratford player also needed hospiatl treatment early in the second half, followed by Issac's grandfather, who collapsed in the crowd.

The club said of Issac, on loan from Shrewsbury: "We wish our young defender all the very best with his recovery. He's done himseld proud coming to step three at such a tender age."

The league later decided that "owing to the amount of playing time remaining" the match was to be replayed. So, three days later, Alvechurch FC returned to Stratford – but it didn't change much, although this time they got a goal, losing 3-1.

The final match of the season, against already relegated Lowestoft Town was still to be played as *The Village* went to press, with victory ensuring Alvechurch finished above both local rivals, Bromsgrove Sporting and Redditch United. Not much of a consolation, but in a topsy-turvy season, which culminated in Alvechurch losing 3-1 to Worcester City in the final of the Worcestershire Senior Cup, the fans would take anything.

Roll on next season!

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